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FROM MOZART TO MARIO.

Reminiscences of Half a Century.

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BY

LOUIS ENGEL.

IN TWO VOLUMES.
VOL. II.

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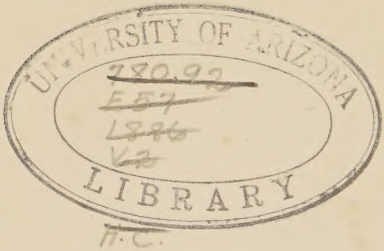
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CONTENTS OF VOL. II.

COMPOSERS.

	PAGE
WAGNER	1
ROSSINI	42
VERDI	86

PERFORMERS.

THALBERG	157
PAGANINI	194

SINGERS.

ADELINA PATTI	245
CHRISTINE NILSSON	290
MARIO	332

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MUSICAL CELEBRITIES.

WAGNER.

IT has been said of Meyerbeer that he was as clever and skilled in working the success of his operas as in writing the scores. But Meyerbeer was an innocent baby compared to Richard Wagner, who did not content himself with having every word or note he wrote puffed to the sky. He did better. With the doleful look and pose of a wronged woman, who thoroughly knows how to pass herself off as the silently suffering victim of malicious gossip, until she meets with the chivalrous knight who, spear in hand, advances in the arena to defend calumniated innocence against detraction—so

posed Richard Wagner all his life, so did he pose to his last moment, and although living in luxury, in adulation, in clouds of incense, he always was, or pretended to be, the misunderstood or the ununderstood victim.

Wagner was in the true sense of the word a great man, since he had both great natural gifts and great artistic acquirements, and had he left his musical talent alone and written as nature enabled him, and science helped him to do, he would never have lost himself in the labyrinthine path of unintelligible, ear-torturing intervals, and harmonies that mock at their name, because they are discord. 'Vanitas vanitatum, omnia vanitas,' is the old, old saying of the wisest king. Wagner was organized for a great musician, with a knowledge of and genius for orchestration, not, as he fancied, above Beethoven, Meyerbeer and Berlioz, yet as high as any man of the century. He was unquestionably one of the glories of his country. But that was not sufficient for him, because other people before him had been the glory of their country, and he wanted to be more than anybody else: he tried to do the impossible, and as it has always

happened since the tower of Babel, whenever man attempted the impracticable, so it happened to Wagner, who, like the frog in the fable, so inflated himself that he burst at last. One great work of his life, the 'Ring of the Niblungs,' according to his own words, was not only destined to wipe out of existence all others, but even his own earlier operas—'Tannhäuser,' 'Lohengrin,' the 'Flying Dutchman,' master-works of conception, invention and execution; and from it he dated for Germany the era of 'a new art,' as he modestly called it.* This work is, with regard to the book, an amalgamation of impossibilities, and a totally unnecessary series of crimes; and with regard to the music so extraordinary that after having maintained for six years that it represented the only real music, that it abrogated all the old laws and doctrines, that in fact it was the 'new art,' with 'Parsifal,' produced in Bayreuth before his death, he quietly returned to the ancient gods, to melody which he had previously declared to be quite unnecessary, or at least completely

* 'Jetzt haben Sie-eine *neue Kunst.*'—Wagner's own speech at Bayreuth.

subservient to his endless recitatives; he gave up the unnatural intervals which no singer could produce, so that those who learnt how to utter *them* unfitted themselves for any other music; he abandoned his excruciating discords for harmonies not only bearable to but rejoicing the ear—he, in fine, renounced the position of the false prophet with his 'new art,' and reverted to the ancient immortal law of real art: the beautiful and simple.

It is said that at a private rehearsal an adept in the art saw Wagner at Bayreuth, and was amazed to hear in the new work—'Parsifal'—the simplicity and melodious beauty of Wagner's old operas, those which he had so energetically repudiated as 'pêchés de jeunesse,' and he frankly expressed to Wagner his agreeable surprise to see him abandon the torturing path of what he called 'endless melody,' but which was an endless bore without any melody. To his amazement Wagner said to him: 'It may surprise you to hear me say so, but I myself find the "Nibelungs Ring" rather tedious and long-winded. I have given up this proceeding: it does not answer.' And thus it was he spoke

of the very course he had put his reputation at stake to uphold and proclaim—the 'new art.'

But if Wagner as a musician has shown great tact, both in what he has done, in at length perceiving the mistake he committed, and especially in the readiness with which he gave it up, he is certainly objectionable from the immensity of his conceit, and the laughable display of his vanity. The French are said to be a vain people, and I have known Lamartine, Alexandre Dumas père and Victor Hugo, at one time the chiefs of French literature, and many a strange tale could I tell of their barely credible vanity. But not one of them pretended to have done more than create immortal works—they went, perhaps, so far as to think that all they wrote, even every word they spoke, was immortal; but none of them ever boasted of having invented literature or poetry, as Wagner said of what he did: 'a new art.'

It is said of Lamartine that when he arrived at Jerusalem and heard that a French lady was established there, he went to her house and told her maid that a countryman

of her mistress wished to see her. He was greatly surprised when mentioning his name to hear that the maid did not know M. Lamartine; but when she came back and said that her mistress was sorry she could not see M. Lamartine, that she never heard of him before and did not know what he dealt in, he exclaimed: 'Voilà ce que c'est que la gloire—une montagne l'arrête!' Yet this is pardonable vanity. About Victor Hugo, the rôles which he used to assume, the manners he simulated, different with each visitor, and of the vanity of Dumas, volumes might be written. I have myself seen many examples of it, one of which I may relate for the edification of the readers of this notice. I found him once, contrary to his custom, dressed in the middle of the day, ready to go on a still more unusual errand—to pay a debt. Alexandre Dumas had a very high opinion of Jews, and he owed sums of money to every one of those who did business. On that day he had a bill of 1,200 francs to pay, and asked me to go with him to perform this act of unaccustomed conscientiousness. But fate was against it, as you shall soon see. It was

one of the satisfactions of his vanity to be known to all the cab-drivers. He was happy when passing before a cab-stand, to hear the drivers cry out: 'Bon jour, M. Dumas;' 'Vous n'avez pas besoin de nous, M. Dumas,' etc. Well, we went on, and as Dumas hired a cab to go to the lower city, he saw that the driver looked rather dejected, and asked him what was the matter? 'Oh, M. Dumas,' said the man, 'I have had a misfortune, and nobody can help me.' 'How so?' said Dumas. 'My horse,' sobbed the driver, 'fell, broke his leg, and smashed my cab; and from a proprietor, I am to-day again a servant to get bread for my family.' 'And how much,' said Dumas, 'would you want to set you up again as your own master?' 'Oh, M. Dumas, such a sum that nobody can give it me.' 'NOBODY?' asked Dumas. 'No; nobody,' in despair said the fellow. 'Well, just for curiosity's sake,' said Dumas, 'let me hear it.' 'One thousand francs,' said the driver. 'Ce n'est que ça? Here you are,' said Dumas, and with the mien of a king he tendered him the banknote with which he should have paid the Jew; and turning to me, he said: 'Ma foi, le

juif attendra. Let us go and have luncheon. Me voilà à la tête de 200 francs. It is a long time since I had so much ready cash!' and we drove off among the cheers and hurrahs of the assembled cabbies.*

Wagner prided himself on being equally great as a poet and as a composer. As to the first claim, his German style is full of affectation, incorrectness, and in many places obscurity, so much so, that although the sense may be guessed at, it cannot always be done with certainty. He used words of his own creation, which no man has a right to do without adding to his work a dictionary explaining such inventions; and then, he used well-known words in a manner which attributed to them a sense totally different from that which they had always been understood to convey, and which consequently would require another vocabulary of

* Dumas was so well aware of the valuelessness of his bills, that once when a creditor—probably of the holy race—brought him a bill to sign, with a sixpenny stamp attached to it, Dumas said to him, 'You see this bill now is worth sixpence; now' (as he signed it) 'it is worth nothing.'

interpretations—in fact, a Wagner's guide to Wagner's language.

During the month of May, 1882, Director Angelo Neumann gave in London four cycles of the 'Nibelungen Ring,' and had the cleverness to foresee that not many people would pay three times as much to hear that heavy work as they paid for hearing good and digestible music; and consequently, in order to cover his expenses, he had to depend on a small number of partisans, ready to pay any amount of money for what perhaps even they could not appreciate, but which they wished it to be supposed that they alone understood. Speculating, therefore, on that inexhaustible source of income, human vanity, it seemed to him but just that the few amateurs should pay for the satisfaction of gratifying their pride, as well as for the intelligent people who kept aloof; so he fixed a trifle like forty-eight guineas for a box, eight guineas for an orchestra stall, etc., and although the house was never once full, the excessive prices paid by the minority nearly covered the expenses. He then flattered Wagner by telegraphing to him that the Prince of Wales

had commissioned him (Director Neumann) to express to Mr. Richard Wagner the pleasure his Royal Highness had derived from the perusal of his work. It was a courtesy on the part of the Prince which certainly rendered him popular with a number of Germans, and therefore it was so far quite in its place. To this message Wagner responded by the following singular reply, of which I leave the reader to judge: 'Sehr erfreut gerade durch Sie fuer den Ihnen von Sr. Königl. Hoheit, Prinzen von Wales, an mich gewordenen ehrenden Auftrag. Meinen Dank aussprechen lassen zu duerfen wuensche ich mit der Bitte um diese angenehme Besorgung zugleich Sie zu einer herzlichen Begruessung der saemmtlichen um mein Werk so hoch verdienten Kunstgenossen in meinem Namen zu veranlassen. Fern doch nahe weilt in (*sic*) euch, Wagner.'* There is a sentence to give a

* Literally translated, and without altering the sense of it: 'Very delighted, just through you, for the honouring message from H.R.H. the Prince of Wales. To be allowed to express my thanks, I wish to add the prayer that you cordially salute in my name all the artists who took so meritorious a part in the performance of my work.'

man consumption who reads it in one breath! The phrase ending the message, where I put '*sic*,' is, literally translated—'Far, yet near, remains IN you, (not with you), 'Wagner.'

As Wagner did himself, so one of his admirers *quand même* held him to be the greatest composer of the century. He even says that Wagner is still greater as a poet than as a composer. If elevation of ideas, adhering to the principle of the beautiful, and mastery over language, have anything to do with the great qualities of a poet, I am at a loss to see how Wagner can lay claim to the title. But what are the public to say to the gratuitous tendency to immorality to which his 'Nibelungs Ring' lays itself open? There is not even an extenuating circumstance. I would not harshly judge a case which may present some claim to leniency. Take, for instance, a woman who follows the man of her choice, whom she became acquainted with, after having been by circumstances compelled to marry an old man she hated; suppose her love to become so ungovernable a passion that she leaves the children whom she brought up, the comfortable home in which she

lived, the respected position which she must sacrifice, in order to live humbly, poor and hard-working, with him she adores above all, even above the duty she has sworn to fulfil. Such a woman may not be respected, but the magnitude of her sacrifice, the grandeur of her passion, elevate her above the level of a common sinner for gain or pleasure. But where in the old Saga a married woman is *unknowingly* attracted by an inexplicable magnetism towards a young man whose origin she knows not, and who is equally ignorant of his relationship to her, they are both moved by a superior power which they are supposed not to be able to resist, and thereby become sinners, free from the worst feature of the crime, premeditation — Wagner took this very Saga, and not finding the elopement sufficiently piquant, he preceded it by a long dialogue, one of those endless conversations with which the hearer of the 'Nibelungs Ring' is so often gratified, in which he takes care to make them clearly explain to each other who their father and mother were, so that they become thoroughly well aware that they are brother and sister ; and thus the crime they

commit accidentally in the Saga, Mr. Wagner makes them fully conscious of, and therefore wholly responsible for. Some critics excuse this feat by saying that in olden times intermarriage between brother and sister 'was thought nothing of.' If this holds good there is no reason why any manager should not give 'Paradise Lost' in a costume which in Paradise 'was thought nothing of,' and that would be a sufficient excuse, logically speaking.

If the depicting of this incest were even a dramatic necessity, it might be passed over; but nothing, absolutely nothing, is gained by it, except the aggravation of adultery—one of the most astounding facts in the matter being, that the Lord Chamberlain, who insisted on another libretto being reprinted three times, on account of one reprehensible word occurring in it, permitted this libretto to be published both in German and in English, with a description in the third book (the work consists of four books) of all the pains which the mother had to endure from a critical though natural event, fully illustrated!

The work, side by side with these unavoid-

able objections, shows a great power of adaptation, and moreover of invention. Yet there are nine assassinations, fraud, and every kind of crime, going on through the four evenings, and not one character honourable, attractive or grand; and an undeniable pettiness in the construction shows itself clearly in the anxious care for details. The great Italian painters trusted to the principal figures in their pictures for the general effect, but never to the small details, which they either neglected or got their pupils to work out. Rossini said once in my presence to a very talented young composer: 'Write your large situations, sketch your heroes, and with a broad brush take care of the big part of your work; do not mind the details, waste not your time and your inspiration on small matters.' But what Wagner did, was not only to collect different Eddas and glue the divers ideas together, but to imitate in a positively childish manner the alliterative verses by which in former times the eye of the reader was made to help the brain.

He gives, for instance, such imitative alliteration as:

'This thy truth then?
In trouble thou leavest the sister?'

A simple repetition of *th* and *th*. Yet more surprising is the trouble taken by the translator who toiled the toy into English with a most unmeritorious patience. When in olden days at the Olympic games, before Alexander the Great, a man performed a famous trick—namely, at a distance of a yard throwing a microscopic bit of rice through a needle's eye with nearly unfailing certainty—and expected great applause, Alexander ordered a bag of rice and ten packages of needles to be presented to him, in recognition of the enormous time he had wasted in order to achieve so trivial a result. I should think a hundred dozen of '*th*' presented to the translator would be a similarly appropriate reward!

But not only for the sake of alliteration but for the sake of common-sense, I ask how such phrases can be excused as: 'Mich hungert sein'—'Me hungers after him'—which has no more sense in German than in English. Or this: 'Göttliche Ruhe *rast* mir in Wogen,'

literally translated: 'Divine calm *rages* me in waves!' Calm rages, and in waves! Of these absurdities the book is full. What Hebbel (the German poet) said of a similar work is quite applicable to this stuff: 'The work suffers from this searched-after loftiness, so tedious and unbearable as to stop the circulation of the blood, and to make a man fall down dead as if frozen on the glaciers of the Alps. These creatures have as little to do with us as if they were born in the Moon, and could there live without air and water.' Such beings are the gods as represented in the 'Nibelungs Ring.' Wagner, only in order to do what others did *not* do before him, wrote a whole opera — it would be more appropriate to say four operas, for it lasts during four evenings—without a duo or trio, *i.e.* without any concerted music, and, with one exception, without a chorus. His duos are never pieces of music where two voices are singing together: no, each sings alone from beginning to end—the personages sing after each other, and continue in this stiff way for four, five, six hours; at last becoming so monotonous that deadly

weariness is the unavoidable consequence. The system of making the orchestra sing and the voice accompany is unnatural, and, like every unnatural thing, cannot live. Can there be any sense in a man or woman feeling anger, tenderness, or rage, and the orchestra expressing it, while the person concerned speaks on in colourless recitative? It is, moreover, interesting to note that this kind of duetting is exactly the style of two hundred years ago, so that instead of progressing to the music of the future, Wagner retrograded to the music of the past.

To quote all the downright nonsense which the apostles of the Prophet publish in order to compel the adoration of the public in the measure which Wagner thought due to himself, would be most unprofitable and unnecessary. Yet it is curious to see to what an insane degree exaggerated enthusiasm may be driven, when based upon no sincere convictions, but only resolved to puff beyond all limit a man whose great qualities are in an inverse ratio underrated by the many, because they are so systematically overrated by 'the select few,' who fancy that to

them only is an insight and an understanding of this superhuman genius conceded.

I will pass over the doctrine which one Mr. Wollzogen laid down, that 'Only those who adore Wagner have a right to judge his work.' Because, says this Chancellor to the Emperor of Music, 'to judge Wagner you must know him, and to know him is to adore him.'—Quod demonstrandum erat. Just as the Sophists proved that it could never be verified whether the inhabitants of Mycenæ were truthful people or not; because, said they, 'Aretas, an inhabitant of Mycenæ, says they are all liars. If so, then he, who is an inhabitant of Mycenæ, is a liar too. In this case, what he says cannot be believed; and if so, none is a liar. But if none is a liar, he an inhabitant is not a liar either. His words therefore deserve credence, and then they all must be liars.' There is no reason why this argument should ever stop. Once begin to build upon false premises, and you may build up to the sky, and the whole edifice will be false. Anyway, another apostle, a Mr. Hagen, goes a trifle further, and beats everything that has been said

in praise of Richard Wagner, because he shows how far, once launched, vile flattery may go.

I give his own words in the following translation: 'Look up, dust-born humanity, to the sunny light! There you see Plato, you see Kant, you see Schopenhauer, those solitary geniuses of all times, all-powerful and gigantic. Yet, above all these towers one genius high over them—Richard Wagner. Hail to thee, Plato; hail to thee, Kant; and to thee hail, Schopenhauer. Hail to all of you old geniuses; but three times hail to you, Wagner.' One would fancy that these devotees are lunatics; but the finest part of the demonstration is, to see how utterly false are their comparisons. It pleases them, for instance, to compare Wagner to Schopenhauer the philosopher. But not only has Schopenhauer's philosophy, treating human will as the source of all evil, and subduing one's own will as the only escape from evil, nothing whatever to do with music, but what Schopenhauer occasionally says about music is totally different from what Wagner lays down as the principle of the 'new art.'

Wagner says that until now all musicians —himself included in his first operas—have been wrong. The music must be entirely subservient to the text. The word is everything, the singer ought only to speak and the orchestra to sing. Schopenhauer, in a chapter referring to music, distinctly says: 'Music, far from being a mere support of poetry, is an independent art, the most powerful, to my thinking, of all the arts. If music were made too much subservient to the words, it would speak a language which is not its own. Of such a mistake nobody kept so clear as did Rossini; that is why his music speaks its own language.' The readers of these lines will find that I say when speaking of Rossini, in the next essay of this volume, that he *does* what Wagner *preaches*. He sings and orchestrates dramatic thought.

Wagner's work began, like that of nearly every musician, with a feeble, unoriginal opera, 'Rienzi.' His life began with privations. The ebullition of youth drove him to political outbursts which then no doubt were sincere, although in after-life he considerably

changed the course of his boat. He was an impecunious ultra-democrat, and fought for radical opinion on the barricades. By his side fought a friend whom he encouraged to hold out, '*come what may.*'

But 'come what may' is an elastic expression, and neither politicians nor lovers are always prepared to stand by their word that they will never change. 'What may' did come: the soldiers sent the enthusiastic but very badly fighting youths to Halifax, which meant for Wagner, who fled, pleasant Paris, and for his friend thirteen years in a state prison. In Paris the young man could not get a hearing, which of course happens to every young man who arrives there poor and unrecommended; and he had to copy music and do menial work very much more unpleasant than what he did in after-life — his previous republican principles notwithstanding—to incur enormous debts and have them paid by a music-mad king.* There was one man, however, who took

* The reader is undoubtedly aware that this king has since committed suicide, and at the inquest was declared absolutely mad, like his brother who was to have been king after him, and in whose place a regent has been appointed.

pity on the poor young musician, supported him, and got him work. This man was a Jew, yclept Meyerbeer, the first man who helped him, the first man whom Wagner attacked the moment he had an opportunity to use his pen in gratitude for services received. Another man gave him the first piano he ever had; this man, also, was a Jew: so that, owing the real starting-point in his musical life to a great composer and a benevolent friend, Wagner's mightiest effort as a literary man was to heap every possible insult and absolute calumny on the Jews, though his Christian friends would have allowed him to die from starvation; but then a Christian is only a baptized Jew. Here I must say that a friend of mine who knew Wagner when a very young man, assures me of his belief that Wagner himself was of Jewish descent, which his features, his prominent curved nose, his shrewdness and the very musical organization that distinguishes so many Jews, render rather probable. He says that it was in order to conceal his origin that Wagner acted the Jew-hater with such violence.

Be this as it may, I know that he not only said that in Vienna the Jews had attacked and most grievously harmed him—the said Jews being the well-known critics, Hanslick, Schelle, and Speidl, all three the best Catholics, as Vienna Catholics go — but even openly stated that he could not return to England because the unfriendly reception which greeted him at his last appearance here, or, in his own words, 'the antipathy which he met with in London, years ago, was based upon the peculiar character of the English religion, having more affinity with the Old than the New Testament.' The fact is, that for Wagner there are only two real religious systems in the world: Wagnerism and Judaism. Those Christians who do not adore Wagner and 'no other God by his side,' are Jews, *i.e.*, a sect whose intelligence is only misdirected shrewdness, turning the world of believers in Wagner into infidels, who follow Mendelssohn, Mozart, Rossini —musicians and melodists unworthy of being named in the same breath with the Lord of lords: Richard Wagner.

I am afraid I am becoming too serious;

and having mentioned the name of Mendelssohn, I beg leave for diversion's sake to give an unpublished anecdote concerning Moses Mendelssohn, the philosopher and ancestor of Mendelssohn-Bartholdy the composer.

Frederick II. of Prussia was very fond of having literary men, artists, and singers of talent at his small suppers, and he enjoyed free humour, and encouraged gaiety with all his power. He was not like Charles V., who honoured musical artists by particularly distinguished epithets, as the following sentence in one of his decrees plainly shows: 'When acrobats, bear-drivers, musicians, and other tramps (anderes Gesindel) pass through the town,' etc. Frederick II., personally fond of music and literature, had a special liking for the philosopher Mendelssohn, who was very witty, as hunchbacks usually are, and he often gave him a seat at supper by his side. It so happened that some small ambassador—Germany was then divided into a number of microscopic countries with pigmy sovereigns, all the more haughty and overbearing that they were so small—tried to chaff Mendelssohn, who with his quick

repartee turned the tables at once on his adversary. Furious, his dwarfish Excellency ran to the King and complained of the plebeian being admitted into circles above his reach, etc. The King told him: 'Mendelssohn was my guest, as you were; and you should not have provoked him, or you ought to be prepared to take the consequences.'

'Ah!' said the Ambassador, 'he is a man who would consider nobody, and would offend your Majesty if it so happened that for some imaginary reason he thought himself hurt.'

'I should like to see that,' said the King, 'but I shall give him no reason for feeling hurt, and, any way, he would not offend *me*.'

'Is it a wager?' asked the Ambassador.

'Certainly,' replied the King.

'Well, if your Majesty will do what I say, we will soon see whether I am right or wrong.'

'And what do you want me to do?'

'Will your Majesty at the next supper-party write on a piece of paper, "Mendels-

sohn is one ass," and put that paper, signed by your own hand, on his table ?'

'I will not; that would be a gratuitous rudeness.'

'It is only to see what he would do, whether his presence of mind is so great, and in what way he would reply to your Majesty.'

'Well, if it is just for an experiment, and I am at liberty afterwards to tell him that I by no means intended to offend him, I do not mind complying with your wish.'

'Agreed; only, the words on the paper must be signed "Frederick the Second," so that he cannot afterwards say he did not know that they were written by the King.'

Reluctantly, but with a feeling of curiosity as to how it would all end, the King wrote and signed the paper as required.

The evening came; the table was laid for twelve, the fatal paper was on Mendelssohn's plate, and the guests, several of whom had been informed of what was going on, assembled, eager for the fray.

At the given moment all went to the ominous table and sat round it. The

instant Mendelssohn sat down, being rather shortsighted and observing the paper, he held it very near his eye, and having read it, gave a start.

'What is the matter?' said the King. 'No unpleasant news, I hope, Mendelssohn.'

'Oh no,' said Mendelssohn, 'it is nothing.'

'Nothing? Nothing would not have made you start. I demand to know what it is.'

'Oh, it is not worth while——'

'But I tell you that it is; I command you to tell me.'

'Oh, if your Majesty commands me, I will say that some one has taken the liberty to make a joke of rather bad taste with your Majesty; I'd rather not——'

'With me? Pray do not keep me waiting any longer. What is it?'

'Why, somebody wrote here, "Mendelssohn is *one* ass, Frederick *the second.*"'

He of course read exactly what was written; he only added the accent—the reader may judge of the effect. . . .

Now let us return to Wagner. As I said, his first opera had no effect; it bore re-

membrances of other composers whose works had impressed his mind; it showed nothing, not even *unguem leonis.* Success, however, crowned his following operas, 'Lohengrin' and 'Tannhäuser'—splendid works, operas in the full sense of the word, not such mathematical examples as the 'Rheingold,' where a lady after listening for two hours asked me: 'But when is the music coming? As yet I have heard no music,' which is the best criticism on these tedious successions of recited phrases. But scarcely had he attained fame, than he wanted to mount up higher than any born man, abusing all known composers, and he particularly desired to revenge himself on the French people, because they allowed the unknown young man to starve. He began posing, as I before stated, as a victim, and at last his complaints reached a personage so high, that he received a promise that all possible endeavours should be made to have his 'Tannhäuser' performed at the Grand Opéra, Paris.

The Emperor Napoleon III. subsidized the Opera with nearly a million of francs a

year, and Monsieur Fould, Minister of Finance, and Ministre de la Maison de l'Empereur, had the Opera especially in his department, where he was dictator. There intrigues rose to such an extent that Madame de Lagrange once told a story of the husband of a singer engaged at the Opera, who thinking his wife slighted by another singer, provoked that singer's brother, and killed him on the spot; and she added: 'Mais les intrigues de la cour ne sont qu'une pâle copie des intrigues du théâtre!' Anyhow, Monsieur Fould informed the high patron of Wagner, whom we will call the Princess M., that she could depend upon his services, but that it would be as well to make the Emperor give him the order.

The Princess was *très bien en cour*, and doubted not that she would succeed in making the Emperor give the order—as he did—that the parts of the 'Tannhäuser' should be distributed, and the rehearsals begun.

Was it the unpopularity of the man—Wagner having recently published several articles attacking the great German masters, sacred to the Société des Concerts at the Conservatoire

—or was it the unfamiliar style of the music? whatever it was, the singers made immense difficulties. First one, then another, finally all sent back the parts, saying they could not sing them. The Régisseur-Général, who could not bear Wagner, whose frightful French pronunciation tore his Parisian ears, put on a hypocritical despair, and, armed with all the letters of the recalcitrant singers, demanded an audience of the Minister, and 'deeply regretted the impossibility of carrying out his Majesty's orders.'

'You forget,' said the autocratic Minister, 'that the Emperor is the master, that he supports the house, and that they *must* sing if he chooses to will it so.'

'That is just what I told them, your Excellency, but I fear it will require a positive order from his Majesty . . .'

Monsieur Fould, who knew very well that the Emperor wished to please the Princess, but that nothing was more distasteful to him than to risk his popularity with favourites of the public, submitted the whole conversation to the Emperor in the evening. It was on Monday, one of the Empress's *petits lundis* at

the Tuileries, where the select circle of the *habitués* assembled, and of course the Princess was there too.

The Emperor had only just been informed that the singers had sent back their parts. This impressed him as an act of insubordination, yet he did not wish to make a state affair of it. He called the Princess, and told her the difficult position he was in. But a lady will never hear of any reason which does not suit her, and she insisted that the Emperor should show that he was not to be dictated to, that surely there was some woman's intrigue at the bottom; and was just delivering a brilliant speech on the danger of putting up with insubordination in general, when——

The door opened, and General Fleury, the Emperor's aide-de-camp, walked in and spoke to the Emperor for a short time in whispers, and suddenly the Emperor said aloud: 'By no means keep her in prison, you would only make a political martyr of her, and give a stupid incident an importance; release her at once.' Fleury went out, and the Emperor, turning to the Princess, said to her laughingly:

'There is a thing you could not do.' 'What is it all about?' asked all the ladies, with a curiosity which of course is most exceptional with ladies. 'The matter is,' replied the Emperor, 'that at the Bal Mabille, where, as you know—or perhaps you do not know—those girls when they dance cancan, are forbidden by the police-rules to lift up their legs more than two inches from the ground, the gendarmes have to watch over the fulfilment of this regulation. But it appears that there is a little girl, whose name is Rigolboche, who infringed this rule; and when the gendarmes warned her not to do so again, do you know what she did?'

'No,' said the ladies, who in high excitement surrounded the Emperor as if he had been talking of some battle just won.

'Well,' continued the Emperor, 'she defied the law in the person of the gendarme, went a few steps back, and suddenly taking her *élan*, with the tip of her boot knocked off the gendarme's hat. Of course he arrested her, but there seems to have been such an uproar and even a serenade before the Commissaire de Police that I ordered her immediate release,

not to make a mountain of a molehill. But she must be very quick, because, gymnastically, the feat seems rather clever.'

'And that,' said the Princess, 'was what your Majesty said I could not do? Certainly I should be sorry to try.'

'That is a very easy way to get out of the difficulty.'

'I do not think it a difficulty, and if there were any reason for my doing so, I believe that I could do it.'

'You think so? Very well. I will make you a proposal. You see in what a strait you have placed me with all my singers. Assuredly I *can* force them, but I would rather not. Now, if you will agree to my proposal, we will settle the affair at once. I will put on my hat and go to the centre of this room. You go a few steps back, just as much as you think convenient. If at a given moment you can take *your élan* and do what that Rigolboche did—but without touching me, only my hat—I will order that the "Tannhäuser" *must* be given. But if you fail to do what you seem so confident of, there shall be an end of the affair, and you must promise that

you will never mention it again. Is that a bargain ?'

The Princess reflected a few minutes and then said : ' Right, let it be so.'

You must know that the lady whom we call ' Princess M.' was one of the most distinguished ladies by birth and position, that she made the *honneurs de sa maison tout à fait en grande dame*, yet that she had such a propensity to imitate what Dupin called *ces dames*, that she took singing-lessons of that vulgar singer Theresa, and that she once in her *salon* sang a driver's couplets, dressed as a coachman—*fallait voir !* Having, however, at heart that ' Tannhäuser ' should be given just before the proposal was so strenuously opposed, she took her courage *à deux mains*—I should say *à deux pieds*—measured her distance well, and . . . .

One month after, the ' Tannhäuser ' was given. The uproar from beginning to end of the performance certainly did not arise from displeasure excited by the music, but from the fact that all the intrigues were known which had been set in motion at Court to compel the singers to produce a foreigner's work, the

foreigner, as I said, having made himself very unpopular through his selfish and pugnacious attacks on the idols of the public. The whole Jockey Club went, and with numbers of representatives, all armed with whistles and keys, mercilessly drowned the music in hisses. The Emperor was present. He came again to the second performance; but it was an *affaire nationale*, their blood was up against the arrogant German, and down he went. The opera had to be withdrawn.

After this fiasco, Wagner swore for the second time eternal hatred to France, and he revenged himself nobly when, in 1871, the Germans invaded that country, unprepared as it was, and beat it as mercilessly as Wagner's 'Tannhäuser' had been hissed.

Wagner published what he called a satire on the fallen foe, dragging in the mud, in the lowest, most vulgar, and inept manner, Paris, Victor Hugo, the whole nation; and in a French for which alone he would deserve the crucifixion of which he always talked.

In the 'Meistersinger,' which he then wrote, he began the reprehensible system of the singers being made to accompany the

orchestra; but the book being amusing, and the orchestration at least full of melody, it goes smoothly to the end.

But what followed—the crowning of the edifice, 'Tristan,' and more than anything the 'Nibelungen Ring'—is excruciating in many places. The singers are mere parrots in the affair. They have intervals to sing which it does not matter a bit whether they sing as they are written or not, for false they are at any rate, and there is no difference of character in the one or the other; the ladies could sing the gentlemen's intervals—provided they be false, it is all right.

Everybody and everything that comes on the stage—a god, a woman, a sword, the fire—all are represented by a few notes which are called a Leitmotiv; that is to say, these very same few notes are repeated whenever there is an allusion to the person or the thing. And these motives are very easy to retain—there are only *ninety* in one work! Fancy learning all these bits of bars by heart in order to hear them repeated every time when an allusion is indicated by the text! You have to go through a regular training to

be worthy to endure the bore of seventeen hours' performance during four evenings. And where, you ask, are the people to submit to such conditions? And what for? Reply: I myself have studied the music, the orchestral score of the four operas, which weighs two tons. I have read fifty-two volumes referring to the subject and its origin; I have heard it in Bayreuth when the house was so dark that you could read nothing, and I have twice heard a whole cycle here in London with the score continually before my eyes. So I hope now I have a right to speak out my mind and to say: A more shocking assemblage of crimes, both uninteresting and unnecessary—a more torturing assemblage of diminished sevenths, enharmonics, forced modulations, unnatural intervals, unsingable recitativos, monotonous, interminable, endless bores of conversations, by the side of an undoubtedly most powerful, genial treatment of the orchestra, I have never heard, and never hope to hear again. Like a drop of water in the desert came in some rare motivos, not half a dozen in four evenings; of these Wagner makes the

utmost, but for our emaciated skeletons this drop of water is no help, no reward, no succour, during the despair of these seventeen hours.

Wagner is a clever man, certainly. But his cleverness tries to induce you to accept what is not music; whereas genius makes you accept with joy what *is* genuine. It draws you to itself, whereas the former, if it does attract you, at the same time rouses a certain suspicious feeling of being taken advantage of. You throw yourself into the arms of genius, whereas you are cheated out of your confidence by such cleverness as Wagner's. Both genuine and artificial music get into your head, the former with inspiration, the latter with false excitement—like good and bad champagne, the one making you feel happy, the other giving you the headache.

This great man, so serious, with knitted eyebrows and full of dignity, who wrote a four-evening drama with one moral, if any moral at all may be deduced from it—viz., that gold not only does not make men happy, but that it makes them unhappy—drank his coffee

only from a heavy golden cup, and surrounded himself with all that luxury could produce, while he preached this supreme contempt of gold; just as Seneca wrote on the valuelessness of money, when he was possessed of thirteen millions of sestertiæ.

It is but just, when speaking of Wagner, to touch upon one other name which became first known to the English public through Richard Wagner; it is that of Hans Richter. The man is born to be a conductor; he plays the orchestra as any performer would play his instrument; he has the most inconceivable memory, knowing scores of scores by heart, not only the phrases, but where every instrument comes in. Being a German, he has unbounded command, not only over his countrymen, but, what is more astonishing, over Englishmen also; and he stood the most dangerous test that authority can stand—ridicule.

His English is capital, and at the rehearsals he comes out sometimes with phrases that are worth their weight in gold. Remember, please, that pizzicato means pinching the string with the finger, and that string in

German means *Saite*, so he called out once: 'The staccato not with the nail, but with the MEAT, on the D *side*.' Once his band got careless, when he instantly shouted: 'We are not in a republic here; will you take your movement or mine?' They laughed, but they did religiously what he demanded; because they knew that, if anyone was wrong in the band, Richter could snatch the instrument —violin, horn, or whatever it might be—out of the performer's hand, and show every one of them what he ought to have done. I have heard him several times at rehearsals call upon the chorus: 'Why the —— do you not come in with such a phrase?' singing for them the music and the words all together, though he had no score before him. Once in Munich a tenor did not appear at the general rehearsal. Richter passed his bâton to Hans v. Bülow, went on the stage, and sang the whole part without a mistake in text or music. When an orchestra know that they have such a giant at their head, he can even afford to speak of the 'meat of the finger-tip.' His position is not to be shaken.

But very different was the case with

Wagner, who started with political radicalism, and when he found it 'answered' better, allowed a king, the 'tyrant' of his younger days, to aid him in his career; a man who set himself up as a victim poor and misunderstood, and lived in gold and silk—not like Mozart, who did not leave money enough to bury him; when such a man poses as a poor misunderstood poet, then it is high time to tell him that clever as he is, talented as he is, gifted as he undoubtedly is, he wants the whole world to be deceived and to fall into the dust before a false prophet, and forsaking all real art, the real masters, the sacred works of real genius—to acknowledge only Richard Wagner.*

* Since writing these lines, the death of Richard Wagner has blunted the point of the arrow aimed at the usurper of music, and I believe it quite fair to leave time to decide whether what I consider entirely unnatural in music will last by its own value without the aid of all the clever intriguing of the composer or not. If the future should decide in favour of this music as against the principles upheld by Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Meyerbeer, etc., I can only say that I am happy not to belong to the public of the future.

ROSSINI.

THE bright luminary whose brilliant rays threw so many big-wigged planets in the musical heaven into the shade, whose birth and death even seemed governed by predestination, shall not be criticized here according to the number of triple crotchets and semi-demi-semi-quavers he wrote with such astounding facility, but as a man of the world, as a genius, away from the canvas on which, in his immense laziness, he sketched all the laughing, mocking, electrifying musical batteries that gave so great pleasure to generation after generation, to the despair of all the shoulder-shrugging schoolmasters, whose dull slow coaches could not follow that premature steam-engine, which got hold of the audiences

of all the world, and ran away with them at high speed, to land them in an Eldorado of delight almost unknown before and after him.

I said 'in his immense laziness;' for, be it known, the real reason why Rossini wrote during a comparatively short career a whole library, and stopped short at the pinnacle of fame, or even why he wrote in two weeks an opera which will outlive so many other works —I mean the 'Barbiere di Siviglia'—that reason was not his activity, it was his laziness. It prevented him from working until he could put it off no longer, and then, like those gifted pupils who do not study because they know that at the last moment they will speedily read and master their lesson, so did he take the pen, and ere another composer had studied what tone, what time, and what preparation to make, his pages were filled, and the work was done, so as to enable him at the earliest moment to resume his *dolce far niente*.

And what a *chef d'œuvre* the 'Barbiere' is! Do you remember that explosion of gaiety, that Homeric laughter, the piccolos screaming,

the clarionets roaring, the double-basses even chuckling, when that chorus in G enters—a firework of fun, an avalanche of hilarity? You feel as if you were suddenly dipped in oxygen. You laugh with him, and are happy and merry with him; nearly intoxicated with the champagne of music—that is Rossini; the philosopher who saw everything in rose colour—*pour le mieux dans ce meilleur des mondes possibles.* The epicurean who lived the most enjoyable life, who above all valued, like Martin Luther, 'Wein, Weiber und Gesang,' and called everybody who could not appreciate this supreme triad of life, 'Ein Narr sein Leben lang.' The man who spoke in tones, laughed in notes, mocked in music, chaffed in syncopations, and who, although full of the very melody which Wagner pooh-poohed, did precisely what Wagner preached—he sang and orchestrated dramatic thought. That was Rossini!

The first thing he did—you will hardly be surprised to hear it—he was born! But being born is a great talent; because it shows much more cleverness to be born for a carriage than to be born for a wheelbarrow, and so it

is clever to be born for glory and fortune, instead of having to be satisfied with describing an illustrious friend's career. Rossini was born on February 29th, in the year 1792. There being only one 29th of February every four years, he was quite right to speak of his nineteenth birthday when he was seventy-six. Remarkable as his birthday, was the date of his death. Like many superstitious Italians he dreaded the number thirteen; so much so, that he never gave a dinner to fourteen people without having some friend in reserve, who had to step in, in case one guest could not come, so that there should not be thirteen at table. And even that plan he gave up in later days—inviting only twelve guests, so that no mishap was to be feared. Equally superstitious was he about Friday, which he considered an unlucky day. And he died on Friday, the 13th of November, 1868.

Pray consider that I am not writing a biography of Rossini, or I would pack and parcel and ticket the different events in his musical life in very regular order. No, this is only a tribute to the memory of a great and most amiable genius; to a dear departed friend whose

heart was full of the kindliest feeling, and who, although jealousy and envy accused him of selfishness, never did, in his harmless jokes and witty remarks, half the harm that the detractors of a great man do, when, powerless to elevate themselves to his height, they try the inverting process of dragging him down to their level. All I intend to do is to note some of the interesting moments I remember, from my own experience, and which may throw, socially, some light on his life. These, I hope, I may be allowed to tell at random as they come to my remembrance.

I made Rossini's acquaintance through my first literary essay in Paris, when in despair of piercing the obscurity round me, of getting a hearing, small as I was, amongst so many great names. I was in a despondent mood one evening at a party, when a tall, stout man, speaking and laughing rather loudly, attracted my attention. His hair stood upright, he himself seemed to measure six feet two; and the moment he spoke, the people round him laughed applaudingly, and he laughed too. The conversation turned upon Cruvelli, who had just then made her

début, as the first singer who, at the Grand Opera, was paid a salary of £4,000 a year. Some of the musicians present seemed to praise her to the clouds, as indeed the whole Paris press did ; others thought she was over-rated, and the discussion, which I listened to with the greatest interest, grew rather lively, when the tall man, turning to me without ever having seen me, said, 'Et vous, qu'est-ce que vous en dites?' Suddenly addressed, called upon to speak among evident connoisseurs, I humbly, yet sharply entering into details, spoke of all the faults which I thought she had, recognising, however, her marvellous voice, and all the great qualities which rendered her so remarkable an artist. It seems that what I said had a certain stamp of sincerity, because they listened attentively. Alone in Paris, yet madly desirous to get on and to show my head above that immense crowd of men, I then little dreamed that I was destined in a few minutes to jump into that notoriety which I so eagerly longed for.

The tall gentleman asked me, 'You are not French, yet you speak French well. What

French books have you read, that make you speak better than foreigners usually do?'

I replied that I had read Georges Sand, Balzac, Dumas.

'And what do you know of Dumas?'

'Everything!' I said. 'I adore him!'

'Ah? Well, if that is so,' he said, 'you may like to do him a favour? *I am Alexandre Dumas*, and if you will write for my new paper, *Le Mousquetaire*, all that you have said just now about Cruvelli, and sign your name to it, you will oblige me very much.'

Gloire! Victoire! I nearly fainted. What! here suddenly was my opportunity. Unknown to-day, my name would be printed to-morrow under an article sure to produce some effect, from the simple reason that it differed from the others, inasmuch as I attacked this Goddess of the Moment! It would lead me too far away from the very subject of these lines to give the consequences of this fortunate event; sufficient to say that thereby my name became known—even to Rossini. I had spoken of the great singers of times past, of the scrupulous studies to which they had subjected their organs, of the

superiority of their training and their execution over that of Madame Cruvelli, who, possessing a voice as exceptional as any ever known, was yet unable to do what certain great singers did, because of her want of serious fore-studies. And in fact I had proved that Rossini was quite right when he said, 'Leave my operas alone; you have no longer the artists required to sing them.' A lady whom I knew showed him the article, and he expressed the wish to know the young man who so sincerely worshipped true art and had the boldness to say so in the midst of a number of fetish adorers.

The exhibition, where at a certain hour I played a new instrument, a combination of three different instruments, was the occasion I so ardently waited for. Rossini came to the musical section, and my lady friend brought him to hear a number of his own melodies produced in a rather unusual way, on an all but unknown instrument, by an all but unknown performer. Quick as lightning to perceive the effects of the new combination, and interested in what he had not heard before, he expressed his opinion with the kindness and

esprit which characterized every word he said, and from that moment I saw him very nearly every day when I was in Paris.

He lived then in the Rue Basse du Rempart, a street which has, I believe, disappeared now; but he soon settled down in those larger apartments at the corner of the Boulevard des Italiens and the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin, in which he lived to the day of his death. I must, for the clear understanding of what follows, give a slight description of these apartments. From the anteroom you entered the dining-room, which a moderate-sized oblong table to seat fourteen people filled almost entirely. To the right of it was the drawing-room where, on Saturday nights, the famous soirées were given, which brought together celebrities of every class or section of politics, art, science or *haute finance.* On the left was his studio, in fact his bedroom—a square little place, containing a bed, a writing-table, a Pleyel pianino, and a wardrobe full of perishable linen and his imperishable manuscripts. On the little table in his bedroom he wrote them; on the big dining-room table the copyist copied them, because

he never allowed his own manuscripts to go out of his house. It is certainly incredible that he should have written the 'Barber of Seville' in fifteen days; not that there can be the slightest doubt about the spontaneity of the melodies streaming even quicker into his pen than out of it, but precisely because, although writing very fast, he had a way of rounding the head of the notes, which took time; and writing a whole operatic score in a fortnight does not allow of many wasted minutes. Yet another instance of *quick* slow writing was Alexandre Dumas—I mean the father. He wrote his novels on long half-sheets; and he was beside himself with happiness when I brought him some large English blotting-paper, in sheets bigger than his own writing-paper, on which he could comfortably turn over the wet sheet and continue writing. His was a wonderfully handsome hand, very long letters, and seemingly formed slowly as if painted, yet one leaf was covered after another in next to no time. Donizetti wrote quickly; to such an extent that, when I saw him write for the first time, I did not think he was writing music. He

had a knack of covering the staff with dots like a telegraph strip, and when he had done so he added the tails and lines. Rossini used to set to work at ten o'clock in the morning, having got up at nine. His toilet took half an hour, his breakfast, house gossip, etc., another half-hour; then he took his pen and wrote continuously. From ten to twelve, while he wrote, numbers of people came: some with letters of introduction, or old friends, and so on. He was very glad to make the acquaintance of talented young artists; he received them with immense kindness, giving them advice, and sometimes letters of introduction to managers, publishers, and singers. But what he absolutely hated was to be stared at as one of the sights of Paris. Once his old friend Caraffa came and told him: 'There is a Russian princess on the boulevard who waited two hours yesterday to see you pass: she wants so much to make your acquaintance; what shall I tell her?' 'Tell her,' said Rossini, 'that I am excessively fond of asparagus. She need only go to Potel et Chabot and buy the finest bunch she can get, and bring it here. I shall then get

up, and after she has well inspected me in front I shall turn round, and she can complete her inspection by taking the other view too, and then she may go.' He was rather fond, not only of asparagus, but of anything good to eat; and whenever he was sent some delicacy in that line, he enjoyed it in advance by unpacking it himself, and then he used to say with delighted looks: 'Voilà à quoi la gloire est bonne.' His visitors gone or not gone at twelve, he put on his wig, which until then lay quietly on the table, his big bald head being covered with a towel for the time being; then he dressed, and by one o'clock every day he was out. He hailed the first cabman he met and asked him: 'Est-ce que vos chevaux sont fatigués?' ('Are your horses tired?') When the unfortunate driver said: 'Non, monsieur,' he never took him: he would never trust himself to other but tired horses; and during all his life he had never entered a railway carriage. Then he usually drove to the Palais Royal; in his latter days he walked to the Passage de l'Opéra, up and down in the shaded galleries, meeting a number of friends, and hearing with great

interest all the newest gossip about singers, composers, and operatic chat in general. I remember particularly two instances when I happened to be with him, having met great composers, and every time he said something worth noting.

Once it was Gounod who had just given 'Faust,' and Rossini stopped him to say he had heard of the great success the opera had met with. 'O maestro,' said Gounod, 'I am so happy to hear you speak of the success of the opera, because all the people speak to me only just of the Soldiers' Chorus.' 'Never mind,' said Rossini; 'operas are like children who have to grow into the appreciation of men. First come the toys, the waltzes, and marches; later on come those parts which the composer thinks most of. That Soldiers' Chorus is what the people understood at once; the rest will come in time. I have often gone through the experience.' Gounod was scarcely gone, when I saw a rather little man with very pronounced Jewish features, common-looking, the shabbiest possible hat covering an evidently clever head. It was Meyerbeer; he steered with outstretched

arms straight towards Rossini, whom he always approached with a humble mock-modesty and deference, as if he held him by far the greater genius, and especially as if this deference was due to the older man. Louis Blanc told me once that he was so struck when first seeing Meyerbeer with that particularly vulgar expression on his face. I cannot say that I found it so. A Jewish and especially a cunning expression I found predominant. Rossini had for Meyerbeer a sincere friendship and admiration, and I give here the most peremptory denial to all the invented stories of his envy or jealousy, etc. I was with Rossini when he went to the Rue Richepanse, where Meyerbeer lived, and where every day during his illness Rossini inquired how he was; and where one day the concierge, with the brutality of common French people, answered Rossini's inquiry, 'M. Meyerbeer? Mais il est mort—quoi!' Rossini fell back fainting, and it was only when Meyerbeer's daughter arrived, and he had cried like a child with her for half an hour, that he recovered himself and I took him home.

In the Palais Royal, however, in the instance previously mentioned, Meyerbeer was well, but, according to his custom, always complaining, while Rossini was in his high teasing humour. Now Meyerbeer was at that time rehearsing 'Dinorah,' and Madame Cabel and the chorus and the orchestra all knew the whole of their parts by heart; yet Meyerbeer, who had a mania for hearing his music rehearsed *sans fin*, would not authorize the first performance to be given. He came towards Rossini complaining, sighing as usual. 'Well,' said Rossini, 'what are you suffering from to-day?' 'O maestro,' he said, 'I am so sick—all over pains; I do not know what to do.' Rossini, who knew that he had just come from a rehearsal, said: 'Je vais vous dire ce que c'est, vous vous écoutez trop.'

He could not resist occasionally saying a little witty *word* for fun's sake, but he never intentionally hurt anybody. I know that he said to a tenor at the Grand Opera: 'Ne poussez pas la voix, ou vous deviendrez poussif' (consumptive), and he was so proud of the pun that he told it me on three different occasions; but I am sure it was not he who

said of Berlioz's music, as suggested: 'Comme ce serait mauvais, si c'était de la musique;' he had too much regard for so great a man, although his over-sonorous orchestration was distasteful to him, and that was just where Berlioz was most desirous to shine. It sounds rather funny that in his time Rossini himself was reproached with employing too much sonority, so that they called him Signor Vacarmini (Mr. Noisy). I will not deny, however, that I know of a rather bitter thing which he said to the Abbé Liszt, who came to see him in his little room, and who improvised rather madly on the small Pleyel piano. When he had done, Rossini said: 'J'aime mieux l'autre.' 'L'autre?' asked Liszt, stupefied. 'Yes, Haydn's Chaos,' said Rossini; 'is it not the Chaos you meant to represent?' Liszt, excessively sensitive, was fearfully offended. I tell the story as I heard it several times from Rossini's own lips, because Wagner somewhere denied it, and even went so far as to call it a mere invention. Rossini was, as I said, fond of playing upon *words* himself, and as fond of it when others did it. I remember that I once brought him a small

composition of my own, 'Le Cœur,' and I wrote upon it, 'A l'élève du bon Dieu, au bon Dieu des élèves: Rossini.' He kept it for weeks on his table and showed it to everybody; not the composition, I am sorry to say, but the inscription. But where he really showed an angelic heart was, when I brought him a song called 'Irène.' I had written it for (the then) Miss Dolby. It was in manuscript, and I asked him, would he be good enough to look through it, and tell me whether I had put the Italian words with correct accent under the notes? He told me to leave it, and come back as usual in the afternoon. When, at four o'clock, I came, he said to me: 'As-tu fait tes affaires? car j'ai fait les miennes.' And, to my utter amazement, he showed me a roll of paper, where he had entirely copied my song, voice and piano accompaniment, had written the Italian words under it, of course, and found nothing extraordinary in the fact that he, Rossini, should be my copyist. I was dumbfounded, and could for a few minutes barely recover my voice to thank him sufficiently.

It was said that he married his first wife,

Madame Colbran, for her money—that is certainly not so, for she had none; but I am sorry, very sorry to say that his second wife, whose antecedents I may have some opportunity to illustrate, he most assuredly married because she had 20,000 francs (£800) income. He told me very frankly that his music would not have provided bread for him; but two bankers—James Rothschild and the Comte Pillet-Will—whenever he had a small sum of money, invested it for him, and when the moment seemed propitious, they sold and reinvested it, so that after a time, his gains accumulating, and being always reinvested, grew to a powerful sum, and he at last commanded a fortune of three millions of francs (£120,000), which, as is well known, he left for the benefit of Bologna, after the death of his second wife, who during her lifetime had full command over it. This wife's name was not Pelissier, as given in many instances—among others in Grove's 'Musical Dictionary,' where other dates are usually pretty correct—but was Olympe Desguilliers; and although of less than modest extraction, she was so handsome that Horace Vernet, one of

her numerous admirers, painted her as Judith, and as such she can at any moment be seen in his famous picture in the Louvre. Before she married Rossini she never was reproached with heartlessness to anybody who professed to find her lovely. Vernet, just mentioned, Jules Janin, a Monsieur Pelissier—whose name she temporarily adopted, *selon l'habitude de ces dames*, and, perhaps, after the fashion of the servants in 'Gil Blas,' who one and all adopted the names of their masters—also St. Georges, were among her more prominent admirers. It is with St. Georges that she once played the following comedy. He was jealous of Jules Janin, and she and St. Georges had had several passages of arms about him. One summer afternoon she was gaily dressed in a white robe, with long sky-blue ribbons round the waist, at the shoulders, and in her hair. Suddenly the door opened, and, pale as a ghost, St. Georges entered. By hook or by crook he had been informed of his hated rival having been there again, and he came determined to break off all further connection with the faithless beauty. She swore most tragically that she was

innocent—when was ever woman guilty?—that she loved only him, and so on, but he was immovable, and said: 'I leave you, and for ever!' 'No,' she cried, 'I will kill myself if you do.' 'Do,' he said, and departed.

She lived in the fourth story, and he had, therefore, some time to devote to the descent. Fancy, however, his horror, when arriving in the courtyard, he suddenly hears the window upstairs noisily open, hears a loud scream, sees sky-blue ribbons flying through the air, and before him to the ground falls his faithless one. With one jump he was by her side, when he discovered—a bolster dressed in a white robe with blue ribbons, which she had flung down to frighten him by a suicidal comedy! This shows what the woman was capable of! I will say, however, that she did the honours of her house, frequented, as I mentioned, by the greatest artistic, diplomatic, scientific, and financial celebrities, with rare tact and intelligence, which did not prevent an occasional outburst of vulgarity. I remember one evening at a grand soirée, the Comte Nieuwerkerke, Directeur du Louvre, enjoying a great position at Court,

where the Princesse Mathilde had taken him under her special patronage, coming to Rossini just before going to the Tuileries, and consequently *en grande tenue*, covered with orders. He happened to speak to a lady while some one began to sing, and Madame Rossini deliberately turned to him, screaming at the top of her voice : ' Ici on ne cause pas quand on chante, vous là-bas, le monsieur aux décorations !' The people looked aghast, terrified, but the Count Nieuwerkerke got up smiling, took his departure, and never entered Rossini's house any more. But when Rossini was suffering, she nursed him with a marvellous devotion. There certainly was in that woman a mixture of littleness and of greatness, often to be found in obscure Frenchwomen, whom natural charm or accident elevates above their proper station. Her poses were sometimes rather ludicrous, but never more so than on one occasion when none of us felt inclined to laugh. It was late on the day of Rossini's death, and he had breathed his last. His faithful spouse was not present. More serious duties had called her away : she was giving a sulphur bath to

her dog. But when apprised of the sad event she came in and laid her hand on the dead man's head, and assuming a melodramatic pose, she said : 'Je jure sur la tête de Rossini, de garder son nom pur à l'avenir' ('I take my oath upon Rossini's head to keep his name pure for all time to come'). Considering that she was then near seventy, the self-denial did really seem enormous!

She was so avaricious that after his death, having made money out of everything that anybody was willing to buy, she told me the extent 'of her fortune,' which amounted to 120,000 francs a year, five times more than she ever allowed herself to spend. Yet the first thing she did was to sell her diamonds. Like the sailor to whom a fairy permitted three wishes, and who, after wishing for all the brandy in the world, and then for all the gin in the world, as his third wish asked for a little more brandy, so Madame Rossini tried to get 'a little more money' when she already had more than she could ever make up her mind to spend. Nevertheless she received at her house the best society, even Dupin, the great Attorney-General, who was so

incensed by the indifference of French people with regard to the laxity of morals of the ladies of the demi-monde, that in his famous speech about '*ces dames*,' he said, that the most respectable women in Paris not only passed over, but made it a rule to imitate their dress and behaviour. This great observer of the *genus humanum* was not, however, above a joke himself; I remember that once Guizot, in the Chamber, having to speak about a treaty with the Shah of Persia, continually repeated the word Shah (*chat*, in French, cat), unwittingly making some play upon the word, which made the members laugh, although he, unaware of the puns which he perpetrated, got more and more confused, and at last asked Dupin, 'Mais qu'est-ce qu'ils ont donc à rire comme cela? J'ai donc dit quelque chose de bien bête?' 'Je pense,' said Dupin, with his fine ironical smile, 'que c'est votre *chat* qui excite les *souris* de la Chambre.'

Several mistaken notions are prevalent with regard to some of Rossini's compositions, and these have been so often repeated that they can scarcely be uprooted.

Thus I know from Rossini himself, that he never wrote the three choruses ascribed to his pen, 'Faith,' 'Hope,' and 'Charity,' but I knew it only when I once accompanied the celebrated Abbé Liszt to Rossini's, where he played, among other things, his brilliant arrangement of 'La Charité,' in honour of the composer; but Rossini declined the honour, and declared that although he never publicly protested, he had nothing to do with these three compositions. Thus again, there is a bar in the introduction to the 'Tell' overture, the third of four bars with shakes for the violoncello on F sharp, the first, second, and fourth bars being made with G sharp, but the third bar with G natural. It is very important once for all to make this clear, because numberless are the copies printed with no natural, and hence many wrong performances. He had made with his own hand a thick large natural over the F in question (third bar of the shake). The copyist, however, who seemed to like the sharp best, never made the natural, and when he brought the copy to Rossini, Rossini instantly pounced upon the missing natural, and said to him: 'You

have omitted what I have written here, the accidental.' 'Je le sais bien,' said the copyist, 'mais cela m'a paru plus doux.'—Tableau. How often did poor Rossini tell the story of that sharp, always remarking, 'What a treat it was to see with what a fine diplomatic expression the copyist said, "Oh, I know it, but it appeared *to me* more sweet"!' This missing accidental spoiled Rossini's intention, so much so that the G sharp instead of the G natural was played even at the Conservatoire, until one day Rossini came and heard, and instantly restored the G natural to its right place.

In his manner he was always the same, most obliging to those whom he liked, and capable of the most tender attentions, as I have shown with regard to the romance, 'Irène.' But when he had, or thought he had, reason not to like a person, then nothing could change his disposition. There is no doubt that he was fearfully spoilt by the people, who yielded to every whim of his. I remember Madame Alboni once saying, 'Si l'on veut voir jusqu'où peut aller la lâcheté humaine, il faut aller chez Rossini.' And *she* loved him with sincere friendship.

He was wont to sit in his little room in the simplest of toilets, with or without his wig, according to the temperature. When it was very warm he made himself comfortable, without heeding the astonishment of the visitors, male or female, on seeing the celebrated head covered only with skin. There he received until twelve o'clock anyone whom he would see; and there he wrote, while the people talked to him, a number of those pieces which remained by his unalterable will in manuscript during his lifetime, and the originals of which disappeared the moment they were copied. It is barely conceivable that he should have written so rapidly, although of course I cannot say what he did when he was young and wrote operas; but whatever I saw him writing, his 'Petite Messe solennelle,' and some arias, vocal duos and piano pieces, were written, painting the round heads, as I stated before. Anyhow, manuscript, slowly or not slowly written, must be good—the only question being, is it legible or not? Just as when they asked him, was Italian or German, sacred or modern music preferable? Rossini said,

'Quant à la musique, je n'en connais que deux, la bonne et la mauvaise.' Yet there is some kind of *festina lente* in writing like that of Alexandre Dumas père, who left something like 1,200 volumes.

The 'Petite Messe,' which I just mentioned, gave me the only occasion I ever had of seeing Rossini on his battlefield, *i.e.* commanding the rehearsal. It was at the house of the Count Pillet-Will, who was his banker. I have confided to the reader, what not very many people know, that Rossini owed the little *bien-être* which he enjoyed to Count Pillet-Will and Baron James Rothschild. I know that Baron James Rothschild, some time before his death, rendered similar services to Madame Patti. It was gratitude for these services rendered him by Count Pillet-Will that made Rossini dedicate the 'Petite Messe solennelle' to the Countess. When he sat down by the grand piano, the expression of his face was worth seeing. Ordinarily presenting a sort of *bonhomie* with rather a fine admixture of humour, it suddenly became solemn as a marshal's, reviewing his troops before the battle. Never before or

after did I see him so. The success of the rehearsal with the idolizing, exaggerating public was enormous, first of all, because the work is beautiful, and then, even had it not been, because they were determined to find it immense; but there really were striking effects with that fresh young chorus of the Conservatoire—Marie Roze and Rosine Bloch were then among the pupils, both slim and sylph-like (alas!), and the accompaniment of piano and harmonium was much more effective in the room than the rather tame orchestra was later on in the Italian theatre. At its first performance in the salon it was interesting to study the way the great musicians present expressed their approval.

Meyerbeer with his humble, affected modesty bowed down before the older master (he himself not being young, the comedy seemed particularly to suit him), distorting himself and uttering every now and then a burst of admiration which he was anxious to show; and writing the next day a letter in Italian addressed to '*Jove* Rossini;' whereas Auber quietly listened, and to all the exclamations of Meyerbeer replied, 'Ça ne

m'étonne pas, je m'y attendais bien,' which certainly was a greater compliment than to appear surprised that Rossini should write something grand. It was curious, too, to hear Meyerbeer next day, in private, speak about certain effects produced, as he said, with 'Rossinischer Pfiffigkeit' (with Rossini's cunning); and barely had the word escaped his lips when he apologetically added, 'of course such a gigantic genius'! Just as Donizetti said, when there was a question about his 'Don Pasquale' and Rossini's 'Barber of Seville,' 'Oh! nous ne sommes que de pauvres imitateurs.' Would he not have been sold if I had not protested against this mock modesty! The same Donizetti, who, when asked which of his own operas he thought the best, spontaneously replied, 'How can I say which? A father always has a preference for a crippled child, and I have so many.' I asked two other great men the same question—Dumas and Rossini. Rossini evaded the question, and said, '"Don Juan;"' but Dumas knew no such scruples—he said straight out, '"Les Mousquetaires," and the first two volumes of "Monte Christo."' Yet

strange to say, a year after his telling me so in the village of Villers-Cotterets (near the Forêt de Compiègne), where he was born and where we strolled about, talking of all sorts of things, Maquet, the novelist, brought an action against Dumas for 'unpaid collaboration;' and in this suit, which extended over many days, he showed by letters and short notes from Dumas, produced in masses, that he (Maquet) had furnished feuilleton after feuilleton for Girardin's *Presse*, where Dumas' novels were then published, and proved per A + B that *he* was the author of the 'Mousquetaires' and the first volumes of 'Monte Christo'—albeit after Dumas' plans—the very works which so short a time before Dumas had called his best.

I arrived at Rossini's opinion of his own works in another way. One of his great joys was to speak of Mattei, his professor of counterpoint, and often to repeat the tale that Mattei had distinctly told him he was a disgrace to the school, and forbade him to say that he was his pupil, because he would dishonour his name. So I once asked him, 'Did he not live to hear of your glorious immortality?'

'My immortality?' said Rossini; 'do you know what will survive me? (sais-tu ce qui restera après moi?) The third act of "Tell," the second act of "Otello," and the "Barber of Seville" from one end to the other.' Strange to say, of the Prayer of Moses, that piece magnificent in its simplicity, he only once spoke to me, but what he then said is well worth repeating. I asked him was he in love, or very hungry and miserable, when he wrote that inspired page; for hunger as well as love has the power of making people write with lofty inspiration. 'I will tell you,' he said, and from his ironical smile I saw some fun was coming: 'I had a little misfortune; I had known a Princess B—g—e, and she, one of the most passionate women living, and with a magnificent voice, kept me up all night with duos and talking, etc. A short time after this exhausting performance, I had to take a *tisane* which stood before me, while I wrote that prayer. When I was writing the chorus in G minor I suddenly dipped my pen into the medicine bottle instead of the ink; I made a blot, and when I dried it with sand (blotting-paper was not invented then)

it took the form of a natural, which instantly gave me the idea of the effect which the change from G minor to G major would make, and to this blot is all the effect—if any—due.'

It will always remain a subject of especial admiration how the man who wrote these grand motivos, possessed at the same time the humour with which he composed so brilliantly what certainly does not look composable, viz., a simple address, as in the 'Barber of Seville,' where the band accompanies with such a charming motivo the words, 'Numero quindici, a mano manca.' His ready wit obeyed his call in music as well as in any unexpected embarrassment. One day, his wife, who had her fits of jealousy, would not let him sit next to a lively young countess, and she so manœuvred that he came between old Madame Fodor and her antique friend on the other side. To take a humorous revenge, he paid every attention to both the old ladies, when Madame Rossini, who would not have her game spoiled, exclaimed, 'Oh, my husband detests old women.' 'Calomnie!' he replied.

'Je n'en connais pas!' ('What a calumny! I do not know one.')

His receptions were divided into two parts, the dinners and the soirées. With the exception of once in the year when Madame Patti came, and the reception was on Friday, both general dinners and soirées musicales took place during the season on Saturdays. These dinners were not very brilliant so far as the eating goes, and he told me when he treated me as an intimate: 'Viens dîner, quand nous serons seuls, je te donnerai du bon vin;' and he had a certain old wine which never appeared but when we were three—he, his wife, and I. On the Saturdays there were always, as I mentioned before, fourteen guests invited. Certain celebrities or particular friends, like the Mayor of Passy, Gustave Doré, etc., were there every Saturday. No one would believe what fun Doré, that inspired painter of the most elevated Biblical subjects, used to make after dinner and before the evening guests arrived. He danced ballet, he sang chansonettes—he has, or at any rate he had, a splendid tenor voice, going easily up to C—he played the fiddle extremely well for an

amateur, and was altogether an excessively gifted organization. Probably now no one would recognise the uncommonly gay and amusing young man who used to make Rossini laugh until he shook.* The fact is, that he had just then passed through the severest struggle of his life, and began to enjoy that most happy moment in an artist's life : to 'awake one morning and find himself famous.' I remember one night, after the soirée, we strolled along the boulevards—walked and dawdled, what you call *flâner*, on those long, straight, wide boulevards, and he told me the history of his life. How he had been obliged to borrow money to be able to get his illustrated 'Dante' into print, and when he had borrowed 15,000 francs, for which loan he had engaged himself for 30,000, he had to borrow again, and that at 150 per cent., to finish the first edition. And at last when he took the work to Hachette, that great publisher told him : 'My dear sir, for twenty-four years have I been a publisher, and I have never made a mistake—this is a failure,

* Unnecessary to say that when these lines were published Gustave Doré still lived.

thrown-away money. I would not take it at ten francs apiece.' Then Doré said: 'After so much sacrifice and patient suffering, convinced that I must succeed, to hear an experienced man like Hachette say this, was frightful. Anyhow, being set-up and engraved, I got ten copies bound, and asked Hachette to exhibit them, on my own account, at his dépot. Barely two days had passed when I received the following note: "Victoire, arrivez—je suis un âne!" ("Victory! come quickly—I am a donkey!") The work had a great and immediate success. We had at once one hundred copies bound, and from that moment the success of this and all my other illustrated works was guaranteed.' Doré used to give his dinners on Sunday, and how amusing they were! After dinner in the Rue St. Dominique, we went into the studio, where there was a piano, a harmonium, and his fiddle; always some great singer or composer or actor gave something interesting to the audience, and Doré's sketches, numerous as a poor man's children, were exhibited on different easels.

Once I saw a little sketch in white chalk

on bluish paper, about eight inches by four, wonderfully effective — no less than 'Christ leaving the Prætorium.' Microscopically small as were the little white figures on the stairs, there was a commanding majesty in its simplicity, and it attracted me so much that Doré, who wanted me to play some Strauss waltzes for violin and piano with him, ran to find me, and said: 'Where are you, and what are you staring at?' 'At this grand little thing,' I said. 'Ah,' was his reply, 'I will paint that little thing big, in loads of colour, and then you will see.' 'I do not believe,' I said, 'that the effect will be greater, because quantitatively bigger?' 'Come along for the "Blue Danube,"' he said; 'you shall see the picture when ready, and then we will talk.' The picture, which after many varied essays grew bigger and bigger until it became what it now is, can be seen in New Bond Street in the Doré Gallery, as everybody knows; in the small, narrow passage leading to the grand room is the modest little chalk sketch, and it will interest the reader to compare the two vastly different executions of the same idea.

To return to Rossini. When music was going on in his salon, he behaved like a quiet tyrant. The apartments where he received consisted, as I have stated, of the dining-room, where he sat and accepted the homage of everybody who came, and the grand salon where the company was and where the artists sang and played, but which Rossini never entered unless there was something exceptional to be seen. I remember that he once sat there and they had to pass a chair over his head, when he suddenly exclaimed: 'Respectez ma coiffure!' meaning that they should take care not to take off his wig. But ordinarily, as I said, he sat in the other room, and the moment any performer had done he went bowing before the old master, to hear his doom. And Rossini did not mind whoever it was; he said what he thought, without disguise. Sometimes even he was cruelly sincere. To Mademoiselle Battu, who had sung shockingly, he said, when she came to him, before the whole assembly: 'T'as chanté comme un cochon!' It is well known that when Madame Patti sang his 'Una Voce poco fa,' she added such a lot of embellish-

ments by Strakosch that, when she had done, he asked her: 'Mais de qui donc, mademoiselle, est le morceau que vous venez de chanter?' 'Mais de vous, maître,' was the stupefied answer. 'De moi?' he said; 'oh non! c'est de la musique Strakochonnée!' but he pronounced it so that it sounded 'de la Muse extra-cochonnée.' One day he presented me with a little piece for the harmonium, called 'Un petit rien,' which I had to play at the soirée to the best of my ability. And, a coward like the others, I went trembling to him, to hear what he would say. He looked awhile without speaking, then he said one word: 'Admirable!' I would not have taken the city of Paris at that moment for this one word!

He introduced me then to a lady who sang magnificently, the wife of Dr. Conneau, who had an exceptional position at Court, because he it was who at Ham, when the Emperor saved himself in the dress of a mason, took his place in prison to afford the time necessary for the escape. The story is, I believe, well known, how the Emperor went out of the prison, with a plank on his

shoulder, unmolested until he came near the bridge, where two workmen met him, and one asked rather loudly: 'Tiens, qui est-ce ça?' and the Emperor coolly passed the plank from the off-side to the side where they walked, and one of them said, 'Ah! c'est Badinguet,' the name of some mason. Alluding to this incident in after-times, some people gave the Emperor the nickname: 'Badinguet.'

Anyhow, the doctor's wife sang, and sang wonderfully, and she had the good taste to sing other composers' works as well as Rossini's; whereas nothing enraged him so much as to see some singers pointedly choose nothing but his works, as though he would have been small enough to be jealous if in his house any compositions had been sung but his own.

There were some musicians who were particular favourites with him; among them was Sir Michael Costa, about whom he always asked me the first moment I arrived from London. When Costa's oratorio, 'Naaman,' was given at Birmingham, I telegraphed its success to him, and mentioned that thirteen

numbers had been encored, and he instantly wrote full of joy, to congratulate the successful composer. Then there was Sir Julius Benedict. I believe that not a singer of Rossini's acquaintance left for London but he brought an introduction from 'le maître' to Benedict. But the man he carried in his heart was Lablache, whose magnificent portrait hung in his salon. He always called him Scorticone, the nickname which they had given to Lablache when he was a very young man, and which means a very lean, thin hack. Surely nobody who has seen Lablache in his immense rotundity would believe that in his young days he was so thin as to deserve that horrid skeleton nickname. Rossini never ceased when he began speaking of Lablache's marvellous reading at sight, of his incredible performance of so dramatic a part as Assur or Tell, of those immortal performances which Lablache gave of Figaro and Leporello, and of his triumph in the 'Matrimonio Segreto.' He was fond, too, of telling people the well-known trick which Lablache played upon a provincial, who rang his bell, mistaking the

first-floor where Lablache lived for the second-floor where the dwarf Tom Thumb lived. By chance Lablache himself opened the door. 'Tom Thumb?' timidly asked the visitor. 'I am he,' answered Lablache with his thundering organ. 'You?' said the frightened visitor; 'but they told me he was quite small?' 'Oh,' said Lablache, 'that is when I perform in public, but at home I take it easy!' I will be bound to say he told me the story three or four times, and every time he expected me, and I am afraid successfully, to laugh as if it had been the first time I heard it.

Rossini, although pretending to be a sceptic — to care nothing about religion or even about sovereigns—was in continual correspondence with the Pope Pio IX., and had always on his piano the photograph of the Queen of Spain, who had written on it: 'Isabelle d'Espagne à Rossini,' the portrait being accompanied by the star of Charles III., one of the many decorations which he never wore, and which were seen only on his coffin.

One sovereign whom I will not name, a king, came to see him one morning when

Faure and I were there, and after having talked great nonsense about Italian music, he sat down at the piano and sang 'Ah che la morte' from Verdi's 'Miserere,' accompanying himself and never once changing the harmony in the accompaniment, which in this piece changes nearly every bar. Rossini, who had an immense control over his face, smiled most gracefully, though his ears were tortured; but he continually glanced sideways, now at me, now at Faure, and I admit that we could not muster the same heroic courage to smile and listen and appear delighted as he did. It was not long after this morning that I had to leave Paris, and I cannot understand by what presentiment he was moved when he said to me at parting: 'Mind this, my boy, where there is no melody there is no music; do not allow yourself to be dragged into those barbarous calculations which they call music, with no music in it. Write graceful or deeply-felt thoughts, but write melody or write nothing. This is my last advice to you.' I never saw him alive again. When I heard of his illness and the operation performed by Nélaton, I was far away, and when I arrived he was

just gone . . . He suffered during the last days so fearfully that he begged to be put out of his misery, and it was a relief to see his tortures ended.

His body was taken to the vault of the Madeleine to await interment, and nobody came to pray there at the morning mass at eight o'clock a.m. except his old friend Pillet-Will and I. When the coffin was taken up in view of the coming interment, we walked behind it, when suddenly the beadle rushed after us, screaming at the top of his voice: 'Eh là-bas, vous me prenez *mon Naples!*' This meant that by mistake they had taken a coffin which was to go to Naples; and had the beadle not become aware of the mistake, all the honours of the funeral, all the greatest singers' efforts, the silent respect and admiration of thousands, would have been given to—nobody knew whom.

So we laid Rossini in his temporary grave at Père la Chaise, before, by demand of the Italian nation, he was carried to Florence—a number of speeches were read in French, in Italian, with all declamatory effects possible

—'une gloire de moins'—one more place vacant at the Institute, and that was all.

I went home with young Tamburini, sad and heart-broken. Tamburini loved Rossini as a father: we separated on the Boulevard; there I met Berlioz, the most Anglomaniac Frenchman I ever knew, and who, in alluding to Rossini, quoted the words of Hamlet, which I repeat with all my heart: 'He was a man, take him for all in all, we shall not look upon his like again.'

VERDI.

'IN the year 1813, on the twelfth day of October, at nine of the clock in the morning, before us Mayor's adjunct at Busseto, Département du Turo, appeared Verdi Charles, 28 years of age, innkeeper, living at Roncole, and presented to us a child of the male sex, born on the 10th inst. at 8 o'clock in the evening, being the child of witness and Luisa Uttini his wife, and to whom he declares he will give the christian names of Joseph Fortunin François. Given before Romanelli Antoine, 51, huissier, and Cantà Hyacinthe, 61, concierge à Busseto. Signed, etc.' This is the official act of the birth of the greatest living Italian composer—in fact, of the great Giuseppe Verdi, the man who closed the

brilliant phalanx of Rossini, Bellini and Donizetti, the composer of the very popular operas of 'Trovatore,' 'Rigoletto,' 'Traviata,' 'Aida.' This document—for an exact copy of which I am indebted to my celebrated friend Arthur Pougin, the great critic and essayist, who unearthed it—establishes first, that Verdi was born on October 10th, 1813, and not on any of the imaginary dates given by other biographers; next, that he was born at Roncole, a little village near Busseto, but not at Busseto as until now supposed, and that he was the son of extremely poor parents, who, being unable to make both ends meet with their little inn, added a confectioner's shop, the provisions for which Carlo Verdi, the father, bought at Busseto from a victualler named Barezzi, who later on took a great interest in Verdi's career, and exerted, as will be seen, a certain influence on his behalf. Poor Carlo Verdi had not only to make the journey 'per pedes apostolorum,' but he had to carry the goods in two separate baskets on both shoulders, with the same physical skill with which scientifically his son carried three and four motivos in counterpoint at one and the

same moment, and each clear and independent from the other (as he did in the hymn composed for the opening of the London Exhibition, 1867, where the 'Marseillaise,' and 'God Save the Queen,' etc., came out so wonderfully), in the same way as his father had carried the two baskets, without allowing the contents to be mixed.

Born in 1813—the troublesome time of big French wars, which began to tell against the hero who single-handed had defied all Europe, until the Holy Alliance fought and vanquished the French army, on the memorable days of Leipsic, from October the 17th to the 19th in the year 1813 — little Verdi's life seemed exposed to danger under the following circumstances. The allied armies had vanquished Napoleon's *gardes* and *grognards*, but a circumstance little known reaped for them all the benefits which they did not even dream of deriving from their victory, at the time. Napoleon wrote to Marie Louise, his wife, after the battle was lost, that she need not fear for him; that he would gather the dispersed parts of his army very soon; that not much harm would come to him, since the

allied sovereigns would never have the energy to march upon Paris, the only thing which could become fatal to his throne ; and that in a short time he would be himself in Paris again, and re-establish his power at the head of a new army. This letter, unfortunately for the Emperor, was entrusted to a courier who fell into the hands of the Cossacks, and who was made a prisoner, and his brief was naturally taken and laid before the sovereigns. From it they learned what would really be the fatal blow, and without hesitation they dealt it.

A large detachment of the Austrian and Russian army on their march invaded the part of Italy which then belonged to France, Parma with Busseto and Roncole ; and in the last-named village they met with many women and children who fled before the cruel invaders. Knowing no mercy, those army stragglers, by far more cruel than regular soldiers, killed men and women and robbed all they could. Some women, as a last resource, rushed to the church, and there fancied themselves safe under the protection of the Virgin. But a few minutes were all that was needed to prove the fallacy of their

hopes. The soldiers tore off the smallest jewel they could find on the women, and at the slightest resistance killed them in the church itself. I remember having once heard an old Russian soldier tell the story that, during the French attack on Moscow, he went through Poland, and it was very cold. 'Fortunately,' he said, 'I met a peasant woman with an excellent new flannel petticoat; instantly with my sabre I cut it from her person and wrapped myself well up in it.' 'And the poor peasant woman?' I said. 'For all you know, she died from cold.' 'Perhaps so,' he said; and that was all the remorse he felt about it.

When these soldiers arrived they found among the women who took refuge in the church one with a baby at her breast. When she saw that there was no mercy to be hoped for, she fled to the little winding staircase which led up to the tower, and there she remained hidden for the day, until the soldiers left. This woman with the baby was Madame Carlo Verdi, the mother of Giuseppe Verdi, who, lying quietly in his mother's arms, ignored soldiers and war and battlefields, and knew only one thing,

his mother—the haven of refuge given by nature to everybody.

Verdi was a quiet child, never troublesome, never requiring to be punished; rather nervous, and showing no decided desire or dislike, except when on a suddenly arising occasion he developed a passionate love for music. Good and evil propensities, noble passions and vile vices being dormant in us, are, so to say, organic parts of our nature; and just as a warm rain may suddenly bring out little buds or grass, or magnificent cacti, according to the productive power of the soil on which it falls and a small quantity of ozone that may accidentally surround it at the moment, so are the qualities of men subject to some occasional shower of gold or of adversity, according to the ground on which we have grown, the education we have received, to surroundings which help to the good or to the bad; for everything in the world is only development, or evolution, as scientists call it. You can develop, you can increase, you can form great qualities which exist in any being, but you cannot create. That is the privilege of a higher being. As

an instance, it often happens that a girl is taken to a great singing-master to see if he can make a great singer of her; or a boy is sent to a music school to learn composition, to become a great composer. But the *sine quâ non* is, Is the stuff in him? is the voice in her? If so, you may with labour and intelligence develop it, but not otherwise. You may develop a rosebud into a rose: if it is raining heavily, shelter it; if a cold wind blows, take it into a hot-house—but the bud you must have. And just as from a rosebud you cannot make a pink, so you cannot make a singer from an organization not born with the necessary elements for that development.

The little boy who was afterwards to immortalize the name of Giuseppe Verdi, one day heard a pedestrian violinist of the name of Bagasset, whom you will kindly not confound with Badinguet, the mason, the man after whom the Emperor Napoleon III. was nicknamed. Bagasset with his wretched old violin came to the village of Roncole, and there scraping as best he could, unconsciously set fire to the powder-mine in little Giuseppe's heart. Bad and common

though the match was, the fire burnt fiercely and rapidly, and the child fell into such ecstasies that the 'musician,' who, though a very small one, had his vanity, was so pleased, that not only did he return again and again to his inspired audience of 'one,' but he told the poor father that the best thing he could do was to make a musician of the child; that he would get glory and money out of him; and so earnestly did he preach that the father took the advice seriously into consideration. I myself know an instance of a little boy who seemed to have a decidedly musical organization, and was advised to learn music. Here comes a moment where I wish to give sincere and, I believe, necessary advice to parents. Just as I said that you will never make a pink out of a rose, nor a flower out of garlic, so will you never make a musician out of a boy who has perhaps the stuff for a great painter in him, or a sculptor out of a boy who might become a very respectable and prosperous tradesman. The boy I just mentioned had really some qualification for music; but what did they do with him? They engaged a piano-teacher as cheap as

possible, because 'for a child anyone might do;' and he bored the boy so with tedious studies that he began to cry every time the master entered the room. This mistake is very general and often fatal. A bad master, who begins unintelligently, gives the pupil bad habits, allows him to stretch his fingers badly, so that they lie flat upon the keys instead of touching them with the tips of the fingers, which alone gives a good touch—and this first and paramount necessity neglected may spoil him for ever. So with the voice. I have seen numberless cases where a bad beginning, or a master encouraging shouting or a way of holding the chin too high or too low, entirely spoiled the production of the voice. The boy in question, tolerably intelligent and gifted, was so bored by awkward tuition that the mother, seeing the child cry—a convincing argument for a mother—gave up all idea of music, sent the master away, and sold the piano. But then came the warm rain—the opportunity. The child was taken to a concert where Vieuxtemps played, himself very young. He so electrified the child that from that moment he made

up his mind to study music. Next day he visited with his mother a lady amateur of great talent, who had a grand piano in her drawing-room, and the child went straight to the piano, and, without tuition or preparation, sat down and from memory played, however badly and irregularly, the greater part of the Andante he had heard Vieuxtemps play the night before. The lady amateur listened without saying a word; but when the visitor took her little boy away, she whispered in her ear: 'Mind you take him to a good master, not one who does not understand him; he will go very far.' This was done, and the boy acquired some name in after-days on the Continent. . . .

In the same way, though through an inferior performance, a similar effect was produced on our hero. Verdi never lost sight of Bagasset, and when in later days the composer of 'Traviata,' 'Rigoletto,' etc., bought the magnificent property at Sant' Agata which bears his name, he always kindly remembered him, received and fed him, and Bagasset never failed to say, 'Ah, you who are so great now, I have known you so small!'

Where is Sant' Agata? you want to know. Italy is called the Garden of Europe, a denomination well deserved by the South. In Naples, for instance, in April, you cannot bear a coat of a thicker material than alpaca. When you see the Bay of Naples, you see one of the loveliest wonders of nature. There is the Grotta Azurra, there is Capri, the Coral Island; there is on one side Vesuvius, on the other the Bay of Salerno, more lovely, perhaps, than even the Bay of Naples; and there is Sorrento, where the orange trees grow in woods, not in small groups, where leaf, bud, flower, and fruit grow at the same moment; where the perfume of spring and the enjoyment of autumn greet you in the same minute; where alone you learn to understand the *dolce far niente*, which consists in poetically doing nothing — not miserably idling away your time in simply not working, which is a purely negative enjoyment, but lying down amid the most splendid scene your eye or your imagination can conceive, and being so happy, and having so much to do to take it all in, that you cannot do anything else but enjoy it and *far niente.*

Between the Bay of Naples and the Bay of Salerno a little path ascends, gradually mounting ever higher until you come to a perfectly blessed spot, from which you see at the same moment both bays, the port of Naples, the smoking Vesuvius, and the sun plunging in his bath most majestically. That spot is called Sant' Agata, and there is the property of Verdi. I am not a hypocrite, and nothing is more pitiable to my thinking than the bigotry of the common people there, who make a sign of the cross every moment lightning is seen on the horizon, or they fall on their knees before the little Madonna on the highway ; numbers of robbers and bandits do the same. But I am free to confess that when I went up that little elevation once in spring, just before sunset—the stillness of nature only now and then interrupted by an Italian soprano in the branches of a tree, the air so perfumed, the sun warming everybody, rich and poor, and the wonderful blue sky reflected in the blue waters—and I saw a lady companion of mine bend her knee to pray, I was deeply moved and fain to imitate her example !

In this very villa of Sant' Agata you can see the *épinette*, the wretched little piano on which little Giuseppe began to learn his scales. It has, alas! undergone the ravages of time—it has no teeth and no beauty—it is deaf and dumb—strings and hammers are mostly gone, and a touching inscription full of orthographic faults shows that 'I, Stefano Cavaletti, have put fresh felt on the little hammers, many of which I repaired equally (*sic*) for nothing, considering myself amply repaid by the pleasure of helping to develop the great dispositions which young Joseph Verdi shows (la buona disposizione che ha il giovinetto Giuseppe Verdi d' imparare) for learning and playing this instrument. This amply suffices to satisfy me (che questo mi basta per esserne del tutto soddisfatto).'

Verdi, like so many other successful musicians, began as an *enfant de chœur*. So began our Edward Lloyd, so began Arthur Sullivan. He was so enchanted with the music of the first Mass he heard, that being *de service*, and having to wait on the officiating priest, he forgot all about it, did not hear a several times repeated demand, and when

he was roughly, I might say brutally, taken to task for it, all he said was: 'Shall I be allowed to study that divine music?' So the father bought the deaf and dumb piano above-mentioned, and apprenticed him to the organist for regular lessons. He seemed to work with an energy which only his over-excited nerves could explain, and an incident which I will mention proved that, however soft and timid the child appeared, still water ran with him as deep as with others. Having a piano, he wanted to find harmonies. It is well known how happy Mozart was when he could find a major-third. Little Giuseppe suddenly discovered the whole common chord! His joy at the discovery was so great that he could not sleep that night, and early in the morning he got up to find his complicated harmony again. But alas! in vain. The inspiration which had led him the day before to this happy *trouvaille* would not favour him again—search as he might, he never could find it. Do you know what the sweet child did? Italian blood was not untrue to itself. He got so furious, that he fetched a hammer and beat those keys, which

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would not yield him the wanted harmony, with such violence, that the noise attracted his father, who, probably aware that example was more convincing than theory, took a cane and produced upon his son the very same effect which the son had tried upon the keys, and most likely success crowned the effort to bring the young man to a more sensible way of seeking for harmonies. The benevolent 'Stefano Cavaletti' called and mended, for the mere 'satisfaction of supporting a gifted child,' all the hammers which had been sacrificed to his unsuccessful exercises in thorough-bass.

The greatest charity is done not by the rich, but by the poor; his father saw that there was no proper education possible for the child in Roncole, and he resolved, however great the sacrifice for the poor man, to send him to Busseto, where he hoped that justice would be done to the musical organization of the boy. But how to manage with the small means at his disposal? There came a providence, a Deus ex machinâ, in the form of a cobbler nicknamed Pugnatta, who consented to take the young musician into his house,

and furnish him with board and lodging for threepence a day (thirty centesimi). I don't know that he got oysters and sauterne every day for that sum; but since he thought of nothing but study, in order to progress in the art so dear to his heart, he was well contented with what he received, and working all the week in the school which he frequented with untiring zeal, he walked every Sunday on foot to Roncole, there to do his duty as organist, after which he walked back again to Busseto. This he continued to do from his eleventh to his eighteenth year, when he was sent to Milan to finish his studies. The payment he received at Roncole the first year was *twenty-eight shillings*, which in the second year was, after very great trouble, increased to thirty-two. But after that, christenings, weddings and funerals were added to his regular salary, and swelled it to the luxurious income of four pounds a year, with which he undertook to pay out of his own earnings the whole of the daily threepence for his maintenance.

I have said that Barezzi the distiller, who sold to Carlo Verdi the provisions for

his confectioner's shop, had a certain influence on Verdi's career. The fact is that Verdi, who had taught himself to read and write, and incessantly continued his study of music, was taken away from the cobbler into Barezzi's house with a nominal position in the business, but in fact as a personal *protégé* of Barezzi, who was so fond of music that he played the flute at the cathedral service of Busseto, and being a rich man was at the same time the patron of the Philharmonic Society of the town.

Here now come the two decisive events of Verdi's young life. Provesi, an excellent organist and counterpointist, was so touched by the modesty and perseverance of the boy that he offered to give him lessons gratis, which Verdi accepted with eagerness; and, moreover, Barezzi had a daughter, then a mere child, of great beauty, and, like her father, exceedingly fond of music. So fond that—after a while young Marguerite married young Verdi, even before he was a Faust of erudition. Although at the age of sixteen he had already developed his natural gifts with such zeal that Provesi declared

he could not teach him any more. 'That young man,' he said, 'will go very far; he will one of these days be a great master.' The consequence was that he deputed Verdi to replace him as director of the Philharmonic Society, and as organist at the cathedral. At this time Verdi began to compose his first orchestral works, wrote them, copied out the parts, rehearsed, and conducted them with his amateur band. It was then that his facility began to attract the serious attention of the music-loving dilettanti, and his friend Barezzi not only got him a scholarship, in order to facilitate his studies at Milan, but introduced him to a friend in that city, and supported him liberally while there.

We arrive now at a rather amusing incident in his life. Rossini often used to relate with great gusto, that his master, Mattei, told him he would never learn anything, and that he would be a disgrace to his school. Verdi seeking admission at the Milan Conservatory was refused by Basily, the president, a theorist of the driest sort, and incapable of any poetic or artistic inspiration. Among the many absurdities which Fetis publishes in his

'Biographie Universelle des Musiciens,' referring to this fact he says: 'Basily tried to guess from Verdi's appearance an indication of his capacities, because thus it is that the chief of a school can mostly appreciate what chances the career of a pupil may offer.' I know of more than one blunder that Fetis in a similar capacity committed at Brussels. What he adds is worth commemoration, 'For, whoever looks at the composer of "Rigoletto" and "Il Trovatore," must admit that his physiognomy surely does not betray the fire, the passion, which alone can create grand works. His icy expression, his thin lips, the stiffness of his manner (cette impassibilité de l'attitude), may be indicative of intelligence, a diplomatist may be revealed by them, but an artist—never.' I will for form's sake record that a friend of Basily lately wrote to Verdi asking him to contradict the 'absurd story,' and to state that the real reason why he was not admitted was that, according to the rules of the Conservatoire, only pupils from nine to fourteen years of age were accepted; but Verdi in a letter dated October, 1880, insisted that he was examined both as a pianist and

a composer, that nobody mentioned his age as an obstacle, and that he was simply notified that he must 'no more think of being admitted to the Conservatoire.'

Verdi thus had to seek private tuition, and went to Lavigna, Maestro al Cembalo at the Scala.* Lavigna seemed to entertain a higher idea of Verdi's essays than the learned President of the Conservatoire did, for he replied to Barezzi, who inquired how his *protégé* got on: 'He will do me and his country great honour.' And, proud of his pupil, he once made the director Basily give him a theme for a fugue which twenty-eight students had worked at very poorly, and when Verdi had done it, Basily, stupefied to see the excellent work accomplished in a comparatively short time, had to admit that he had refused a pupil who did better work than those whom he had accepted. It was Haydn's 'Creation'

* 'Maestro al Cembalo,' as everybody knows, literally translated, 'master at the piano,' means at the theatre, the conductor who makes the chorus and the singers study the score at the piano, before the orchestral rehearsals begin. Instead of this, a French musical paper, speaking of Lavigna, taking the words too literally, translated them, 'professor of the cymbals'!

which furnished Verdi with the first opportunity to show the stuff he was made of. His master, Lavigna, knowing the serious character of his pupil, asked him whether he wished to attend the rehearsals of that famous oratorio, and he accepted with eagerness. Young, thin, not well dressed, unknown, he sat there and listened, three well-known musicians directing the execution. The Milan Philharmonic Society, which started the work, had for president Signor Masini, who, with the best intentions, did not possess sufficient knowledge. One day it so happened that all three *maestri* who were to superintend the rehearsals kept away, and Masini, who dared not taking the responsibility upon himself, turned round to the modest-looking young man whom he had seen several times listening very attentively, and asked him whether he would accompany from the orchestral score. He consented, just as Dr. Richter, the great conductor, consented on a similar occasion; just as Sir Michael Costa, who had come to England to sing, suddenly showed what he could do with the bâton. Several members of the orchestra smiled, others

sneered, but as the rehearsal went on, the inspiration of the moment transformed the young man into a veritable commander; he played the accompaniment with the left hand alone, and conducted with the right, and when the rehearsal was over, all those who had mocked at him congratulated him. Henceforward, the direction of the work and of the whole concert was left to him; he became the *protégé* of that famous amateur, Count Belgiojoso, who introduced him to his friends, and the upshot of the affair was that Verdi received his first order to write an opera!

That Busseto has always been thought the birthplace of Verdi, although, as shown above, the name of his birthplace was Roncole, is as easily explained as the statement that Rossini came from Bologna, whereas he was born at Pesaro. Where a man makes his first important studies, and where his name first becomes known as having done something, that is the place with which his name is mostly associated. Handel is much better known for the work he did in England than as a German born at Halle; and Verdi, so far as

orchestral composition goes, began at Busseto. The Philharmonic Society of that little town preserves to this day the first overture he ever wrote, and which he wrote for that society fifty-eight years ago, at Easter, 1828, when Verdi was fifteen years old.

Besides, the people of Busseto have no small pretensions as to the antiquity of their musical *noblesse.* They say that so long ago as the meeting between the Emperor Charles V. and the Pope Paul III., which took place at Busseto, the art-loving people of the town went out to meet their illustrious guests and celebrate their arrival 'with gorgeous music.' If I mistake not, it was that Paul III., a most liberal-minded, kind-hearted man, who established and confirmed the Order of the Jesuits, and ordered a general inquisition against all Protestantism, the mildness and true liberality of whose judgments have excited the admiration of every Christian heart ever since! . . . I wish to pass over a period of several years, during which intrigues of the Catholic clergy prevented Verdi from becoming organist as the legitimate successor of his master. The fact is, that being director of the Philharmonic

Society, he was supported by that body and all the connections in town having transactions with them. But a man of very small ability, named Ferrari, came recommended by two bishops, and the clergy thought it their duty to uphold the introduction of their superiors against all merit and talent. In order to exalt the claims of their *protégé*, they tried to underrate those of his gifted rival, and acted upon the principle of Basil in the 'Barbier de Séville,' who so well explains in the air of the 'Calomnie' how you must go to work softly, beginning to spread rumours against the character of 'your friend;' by-and-by you come out with some alleged facts, let your acquaintances 'colporter' right and left what kind things they can, and at last smash the good reputation with a crowning blow. The Catholic clergy are very powerful. Not that I wish to underrate the personal character of many noble self-sacrificing priests, the self-denial of sisters of mercy and the good they do in many instances; but when it becomes a matter of skilful persevering intrigue of the *Calomniez toujours, il en restera quelque chose* sort, woe be to the man

who falls under the displeasure of the Jesuits or their colleagues. Invisible, intangible will be the arrows that fly round him and wound him in the most sensitive part of his soul; and many are the examples where, without being able directly to trace influence or to adduce what is called proof or legal evidence, a man has been surrounded with enemies, his friends turned from him, his employment gone, and he reduced to a nonentity.

In Verdi's case the incapable man remained organist, while *he* remained at the head of the Philharmonic Society; but there was no reason why Verdi should not give musical instruction to all those who wished to become members of the Philharmonic Society, so he retained that post for the space of three years, at the liberal pay of twelve pounds a year! It will perhaps give an idea of the genius with which Verdi knew how to live well on little money, when I say that on this liberal allowance of one pound a month he did—what do you think? He married! As I stated before, he fell in love with Barezzi's (his benefactor's) daughter, who, having nothing else to do, fell in love with him, and the father, a very rich

man, having conceived the highest hopes of Verdi's future, without one moment's hesitation gave his consent to the marriage, which was celebrated in 1835, that is, when Verdi was twenty-two years old. He finished his three years' tuition though, and being provided with what every poor man is sure to be provided with—the poorer the more certain—several children, he found that the time had come when he must try to do something towards fulfilling the hopes his generous friend had conceived of him, and he planted his banner at Milan. Perhaps I may mention here that Verdi owed his good luck—and what greater good luck can a young man of twenty-two years meet with than to marry the girl he loves, when she is handsome, clever, and good, as was Marguerite Barezzi? —his luck, then, he owed to that archfiend of all people who want rest and peace, the piano, that torture which so tormented the public in Germany that they recently passed a law by which it is forbidden to every pianist to play with the windows open, or in any manner so as to annoy passengers in the street! Yet to the piano, which Marguerite

had learned and played pretty well, Verdi was indebted for the first opportunities of tendering advice, playing duets, furnishing in fact the 'pretext' which in the case of a girl of eighteen and a young man of twenty-two should lead only to one result—the happiness of married bliss.

The first thing Verdi did at Milan was to get a young poet who answered to the classical name of Themistocles Solera to write him a libretto, to which in prodigious haste he composed the music. Solera was a man of great talent, having achieved a brilliant success with his first work, 'I miei canti.' He was then only eighteen years old, and composed as well as he wrote poetry. Although I have it from a reliable source, I will not be thoroughly responsible for the story, that in later days he wrote an opera himself, for which he had not yet prepared an overture, and that he found and took, *sans façon*, one of the overtures which Verdi had composed for the Philharmonic Society of Busseto, and actually got it executed in the presence of Verdi, who was completely stupefied. Anyway, the libretto he wrote for Verdi—I should

rather say re-wrote, because Verdi had received it not from him, but from Masini—was 'Oberto di San-Bonifacio.' The score finished, the director, who had ordered it for the Teatro Filodrammatico, lost his position; but Verdi, in consequence of some friendly remarks of Ronconi, succeeded in having his opera performed at La Scala, the dream of all young composers! And this young composer had brought his score with all the voice parts copied out by himself. The great day, 'dies illa,' the day of anxiety arrived, and on November 17th, 1839, the first performance took place, with such success that he instantly sold the score for 2,000 lire Austriache (about £80) to Ricordi, the founder of the present great house of that name, and Merelli, the director of the Scala and of the Imperial Opera at Vienna, at once gave him an order for three more operas, allowing eight months for each, that is about two years altogether. Verdi's contract with Merelli, who had taken the *mise en scène* entirely at his own risk, was that if he sold his score, half of the money should go to Merelli, which was not at all a harsh condition, seeing that even

Meyerbeer, after his success with 'Marguerita d'Anjou' and 'Il Crocciato,' in Italy, had to contribute 30,000 francs towards the *mise en scène* of his 'Robert le Diable' at the Paris Opera, rue Lepelletier, which opera afterwards proved the largest 'cash success' they had ever had. But if Verdi's first work was successful, his next work, an opera buffa, was a dreary failure, and for two reasons: first, this *genre* of music was not in his way. He had the great style, but not the small. But though it may appear to require less talent to write what seems to be a smaller task, the fact is that it is *another* kind of talent, and many men may be able to write a comedy and yet not to write a burlesque. It is not a more elevated talent, but it is a talent differing from the other, just as you may find an artist able to paint an oil picture, yet unable to paint an aquarelle. There was another and a very sad reason for his not succeeding in his work. What this reason was, I will state presently; but by way of parenthesis, I may perhaps answer an objection which might be raised by the intelligent reader. How is it that other great composers have tried their

hand at both kinds of music and have succeeded ?

The answer is very simple. Mozart has written 'Don Giovanni' and the 'Zauberflöte.' Rossini has written 'William Tell' and the 'Barber of Seville;' each of the two masterpieces of a totally different style. But Verdi had not the versatility of Mozart and Rossini. Genius is like a brilliant; it has *facettes* which reflect the light differently, and not every genius, although genius, has the same reflections. Neither Meyerbeer nor Beethoven could have done it; in fact, Meyerbeer tried and failed. Moreover, whatever your inspirations may be, the creative power depends on the physical condition. Give a man who has a poem to write half a bottle of Château d'Yquem to drink, and his verses will be as sparkling as the fluid. Persuade a man just as he is going to work to swallow a bottle of brandy, and the greatest talent will fall a victim to the stupor sure to incapacitate him for twenty-four hours. How much more then was Verdi the victim of circumstances when, having just begun to work, he fell ill of

diphtheria, and when he got better he suddenly remembered that his rent was due in three days, and that he had no money! He asked a friend to go to Merelli, his manager, and borrow the sum (eight pounds!); but the friend came back without the money, for a thousand pounds is easier found when you have a position, than five pounds when you have none. His wife, who could not bear to see him unhappy, went out, taking with her all her little jewellery, on which she succeeded in raising the heavy amount.

Verdi, deeply touched by this quiet proof of tenderness—which it is so entirely in the heart of a woman to give, without boasting, without phrases, silently doing what is necessary—relieved as he was thereby from the care which weighed upon his mind, set to work seriously, when his little boy fell ill. The doctor could not find what was the real cause of the disease; and the poor child, after a few days' illness, died. This misfortune rendered the young mother miserable. One may die and be forgotten by friends, by nearest relations, but the mother will not get over her grief; for it is said, and verily I

believe with reason, the only real love which exists in the world, which will survive separation, will submit to any sacrifice and remain always the same, is the love of a mother! Imagine then to what a degree of despair she was driven when, a few days after the little boy had been carried to his grave, the little girl was taken ill, and in less than a week she too was gone! This was in May. Whether from the terrible excitement, or from accidental exposure, the young mother caught a severe cold, and she too was laid up with diphtheria, and on the 19th day of June the third coffin was carried out of the house. Verdi's whole family in the cemetery, and he alone in the world! In less than two months all that was dear to his heart lost! Yet under these conditions he was expected to finish his opera buffa, which by contract he was bound to deliver to the management on a certain day. He did finish it, and it was sent to the theatre on the day fixed; but, of course —an opera buffa the produce of tears and despair—'Un Giorno di Regno' was an absolute failure.

Is it to be wondered at, that, heart-broken

by his sorrows and discouraged by the non-success of his latest work, he begged of Merelli to release him from his contract, as he was determined to write no more. 'Determined!' How often in life do we fancy that nothing will make us change our mind! It is nearly impossible not to remember the 'Never' of a popular comic opera, which is invariably followed by the query, 'Never?' when, 'Well, hardly ever,' is found to be the safety-valve to let out the steam of an 'inflexible' resolution. Merelli, one of the most astute men it has been my pleasure to know, was a great deal too astute to insist, and reply to Verdi, 'I have my contract, I must have my pound of flesh.' Oh no; he told him that although non-success with one work did not mean want of success hereafter; he (Merelli) would by no means force his friend's will. And, so saying, he returned the contract. Verdi, as we all know, did not carry out his resolution of total abstinence from composing, but succumbed to a temptation which Merelli, who knew human character but too well, adroitly dangled before him.

There was a German composer then at

Milan, a Berliner. His name, Nicolai, is well known in musical circles in this country, from having set to music, and successfully too, the 'Merry Wives of Windsor.' He was under a contract to write an opera for Merelli. But Merelli, although quite prepared to take Nicolai's opera, wanted one from Verdi, in whom his shrewdness saw the composer of the future. He quietly waited for that great helpmate of lovers and trusting souls in general, accident, and accident helped him. Going with a libretto of Solera, Verdi's first collaborator, to see Nicolai, who did not understand the charm of the book, he found himself suddenly *nez à nez* with Verdi. 'Ah,' he said, 'this is fortunate; I just want an impartial judge, a man who has nothing more to do with the stage, to read a libretto which the author says is a masterpiece, while the composer says lighting the fire with it is the only use it is good for! As you have given up all idea of opera-writing you will be just, and tell me sincerely what you think of the value of this libretto.'

'I have done with librettos,' said Verdi sulkily.

'For yourself, yes; but to oblige a friend?'

'It cannot matter very much to you what I say of the work, for you know how highly I think of Solera, the poet.'

'This is how it matters to me, that without mentioning your name, I can quote an authoritative opinion, not my own, consequently quite unbiased, and at once set at rest this unseemly quarrel.'

'Vorrei e non vorrei,' Verdi was induced to take the libretto home; and once alone with the manuscript, having so long had no other company but his sad thoughts, having repressed all his musical ideas, seriously believing that he had entirely given up the musical career —or, as Kingsley so cleverly puts it, not believing it, but believing in believing it—he put the large-letter MS. on the table. The mystic attraction brought him nearer, but he ran away from it, came back, left it again, shut the book and threw it on his desk, when —by misfortune—it opened just at the passage: 'Va pensiero sulle ali dorate,' 'On your golden wings fly, thought.' Rather curious to see what followed, Verdi began

reading and re-reading, and finally finished the night over the 'situations,' which as the morning hours approached he knew nearly by heart. And what was the end of it?

The book was 'Nabucco.' Need I say what success it had? The way employed by Merelli to get him to do it was of the most touching simplicity. Verdi, making himself believe that he would not compose any more, took the book back to Merelli, when after a short dialogue Merelli added a short but decisive action. 'What say you?' he called out the moment he saw Verdi; 'capital book, isn't it?' 'Capital,' said Verdi. 'Well, then, set it to music.' 'Not for worlds. I will not even touch it.' 'What!' said Merelli; 'set it to music—this instant, set it to music!' 'With these words,' writes Verdi himself to a friend, 'he took the libretto, forced it into my large coat-pocket, caught hold of me by the shoulder, pushed me out of his cabinet, shut the door in my face, and—well, to show me that he fully meant it—turned the key in the lock; and that ended the argument. What was I to do? The lines sang in my head. I returned slowly home. Now one verse

came; now another put in an appearance on the music-paper; and before I knew what I was about, I had written the whole score.' That the course of true art does not always run smooth, Verdi soon found out. Although Merelli had compelled him to write the opera, as it were, against his will, he made difficulties about giving it during the Carnival, the only brilliant time for novelties, because he had already announced three other operas, and Verdi was comparatively unknown. Not being known is the misfortune which young artists full of talent will not see the weight of. One should really advise an artist not to come before the public until he is universally known, like the man who said he would not jump into the water before he had learned how to swim. Verdi, however, was firm. He said his opera must be given during the Carnival, or never. So the new *cartellone* (list of new operas to be given) was published with 'Nabucco' in it. Then Verdi insisted on a larger chorus, and Merelli refusing to increase his daily expenses, Verdi engaged and paid out of his pocket the surplus. When he appeared at

the rehearsals, the novelty of the music attracted the workmen all over the house—in Italy everybody is so fond of music—and his work got a reputation which excited expectations on the first evening to a high point. The fact is that, after Mozart, Rossini took the sweet melodious strains, and moreover wrote for the voices such brilliant passages, music so lively and full of *entrain*, that the singer was the real *point de mire* of his works. Verdi, having made prolonged studies of orchestration, and studies of sacred music under several masters, turned his attention more to the orchestra; and he was even once heard to say to a friend who complained that the lady singers would not study, and that they could no longer sing all the difficulties which, with such a profuse hand, Rossini had lavished on his prima donnas, 'Never mind, these ladies wish to gain fortune and glory like others, but without taking the trouble others have taken. I don't care, I put the prima donna in the orchestra. If the singer does not want support, all the better; if she does, well then the public will hear all I wrote played instead

of sung, and the opera will go on all the same.'

Verdi in fact did for Italian music what Meyerbeer did for French music, what Wagner did for German music. He enhanced the importance of the orchestra, and paid much more attention to the declamatory performance of the meaning; and without going into the sometimes childish significance of every word, of every syllable I might say, as Wagner does with his exaggerated use of Leitmotive, he disdained, as Rossini notably did, in his last operas, to let the singers reap the whole benefit of the musical circus riding; and forced them to be actors as well, and to combine the expression of the music with the expression of the words, the great though exaggerated doctrine of Wagner. Combining this new principle with a nearly unprecedented flow of melody, it is easy to understand that 'Nabucco' was expected to make a great sensation, so much so that when, according to usage, Verdi took his place at the beginning between the double-bass and the solo violoncello Merighi, the latter said to him before the overture began:

'Maestro, I would give something to stand in your place to-night.' I have particular pleasure in mentioning this Merighi, because we all owe him something. He was the teacher of Piatti, the idol of the Monday Popular audiences. Merighi's expectations were not only fulfilled, but surpassed to an extent not common in those times. Touching is the modesty of the composer, who, after the performance, went home with a friend to their modest lodging in the fourth floor of a house in the Strada degli Andeghari. The friend, proud of him, said—'Well, I hope you are satisfied?' 'To tell you the truth,' said Verdi, 'when, after the finale of the first act, the whole public got up shouting, vociferating, gesticulating, I was really afraid they mocked at the poor composer, or that they meant to treat me somewhat—practically. I confess I hoped for success, but I did not look for such a triumph.'

According to the well-known maxim that nothing succeeds like success, the town was at once full of the young composer's name; and though he was not so young as to be

a miracle like Mozart, who conducted his first opera at the age of fifteen, he was young enough to arouse in the inflammable hearts of his countrymen the confident hope of a *nuova gloria!* Merelli, who had in fact forced upon Verdi the series of triumphs which this first perspective opened, and had from the first shown himself his staunch friend, was of course too happy, and pressed Verdi in his arms with Italian impulsiveness. 'Yes,' said Verdi, 'it is all very fine, now you embrace me; but last year, when I was in want of eight pounds, you refused me!' 'What,' said Merelli, 'I refused you! Who says that?' Verdi having named the friend who returned without money from him, Merelli took Verdi at once to him, and then it came out that this man, too shy to ask Merelli for money on behalf of Verdi, had never said a word about it, and when Verdi asked for the result of his message, only shrugged his shoulders; and when Verdi said in despair, 'No money?' he simply said, 'No.' Thus he lied without actually telling a lie, and left Merelli under the suspicion of

unkindness. This is a common perfidy. Schiller, in his 'Cabale und Liebe' ('Love and Intrigue'), gives a sharp rebuke to such ambiguous conduct. Louise, in love and despair, finds life unbearable, and tells her father that she is going to jump into the river. 'And did you consider,' asks her father, 'what mortal sin you commit by taking your own life?' 'Well,' says the girl, 'I have made up my mind to ask the Lord's pardon while I am jumping in.' 'That is,' says the father, 'you offer to repent of your theft the moment you know the stolen goods to be secure, and beyond retrieving.' This is just what this man did, and that is why one should be so careful not to believe in gossips. 'Gossips and go-betweens,' says Schiller, 'have done more harm with their tongues than dagger and poison in murderers' hands ever did.'

The moment the matter was cleared up, Verdi saw that he had no reason to doubt Merelli's friendship; in fact, as was clearly proved, it was to his friendly pressure that he owed the return to a career which was soon to be so successful. It would not be quite

inappropriate, 'I reckon,' as the Americans say, to state that the prima donna, who powerfully contributed to the success of 'Nabucco' by her brilliant execution, her dramatic power, and an unusually fine voice, was Mademoiselle Giuseppina Strepponi, who did what I know of no other great singer—she stopped her career while in full possession of her vocal power, her youth and beauty; an extraordinary fact, seeing that usually singers, especially ladies, will never get old, will never stop singing even after youth and voice have left them. Mademoiselle Strepponi interests us also for quite another reason, for she married, and whom do you think? The subject of these pages, Giuseppe Verdi.

Merelli next sent for Verdi, and told him, that it having been decided that he should compose the opera d'obbligo for the next season, a contract *en blanc* was prepared. 'Fill in your conditions,' he said, 'and what you write shall be executed.' Verdi asked £300, which was granted. And Ricordi paid for his right of publication £100, which is rather less than what a certain French com-

poser made an English publisher pay for his copyright in England, viz., £4,000, although this latter opera proved such a failure in Paris that it never was engraved here, the publisher not wishing to throw away good money for engraving after bad money paid for copyright. 'Nabucco' was played in London in 1857 by both Italian Opera Companies, though under different names — at Her Majesty's under Lumley, and at Covent Garden under F. Gye. After 'Nabucco' came 'I Lombardi,' another great success; but Verdi's name was by that time well known, and the opera was translated into nearly every European language. Verdi was then besieged by a number of Italian theatres to write *the* opera of the season. He chose among all of them La Fenice, of Venice, and there 'Ernani' was first given, the great drama of Victor Hugo transformed into a libretto by Piave, who afterwards furnished Verdi with 'Macbeth,' 'I due Foscari,' 'La Traviata,' 'Rigoletto,' and several others. The success of 'Ernani' was instantaneous, and so decided that before the season was over the opera was given in no less than fifteen theatres in Italy.

Verdi's celebrity by this time was such that he only had one rival, and that was Donizetti. Poor Donizetti, who died soon afterwards of softening of the brain, already began to give signs of failing, but notwithstanding his professional jealousy he fully recognised and admitted Verdi's genius. A false modesty was rather characteristic of the man. I remember having once spoken to him about Rossini. 'Oh,' said he, 'nous ne sommes que de pauvres imitateurs.' I was not the dupe of this, and I said: 'Don't you think Rossini wrote with an immense facility a large number of great works?' 'Oh, quite without precedent,' he said, a certain little sneer lurking in the corner of his eye. 'Oh,' I said, 'but you have written over forty operatic scores to my knowledge.' 'Forty-five,' said he deprecatingly. 'Well,' I said, 'and Rossini?' 'Thirty-four, so far as I know,' he replied, barely trying to suppress a satisfied smile. Yet Rossini, who with his magnificent 'William Tell' voluntarily closed his career, was, so to say, not among living rivals, because he worked no more; but Verdi, who stood on the other end of the

ladder, beginning to climb up and threatening to come on very fast, gave Donizetti serious ground for reflection. He was, however, both too honourable and too shrewd to speak ill of Verdi, and once when in his lazy moments he sat down in a fauteuil by the side of the piano and made me play a number of his own motivos and some of Meyerbeer's and Verdi's, especially the quartet from 'Rigoletto,' he suddenly jumped up and said: 'It is magnificent; now tell me frankly, is it or is it not more important (plus large) than the sextet of "Lucia"?' 'Can you tell me, maestro,' I said, 'whether a dark beauty or a fair-haired one can be called handsomer? They are both absolute masterpieces, both certain of a long-enduring success, of an eternal encore so long as opera will be given; why must one be handsomer than the other?'

And this was my candid opinion. A flatterer would probably have said: 'The quartet of "Rigoletto" is a beautiful piece, but your sextet is immortal,' or some such stuff, which would have flattered Donizetti without convincing him; for it is a feature of flattery that it agreeably tickles the ear even when

the mind is strong enough to resist the temptation of believing it. I must say, however, that sweet, clever, and undoubtedly effective as this sextet of 'Lucia' is, and has proved itself to be before audiences of every country, the problem which Verdi has solved in the quartet of 'Rigoletto' (that of making four people express four different sentiments, each singing the melody appropriate to the words, love, despair, mockery, etc., and yet the whole so linked into each other, that they give an admirable ensemble), is one of the most difficult in music, and solved in the most brilliant and admirable manner possible, rendering this quartet one of the most remarkable creations of musical genius.

'Macbeth' had a great success at Florence, but of short duration. A remarkable incident was, that an aristocratic amateur, who afterwards became Senator in the second Empire of France, and composer 'pour tout de bon,' Prince Poniatowski, with several friends, got up a subscription in honour of Verdi, to whom a laurel crown of gold was presented, which had on each leaf the title of one of Verdi's successful works engraved.

'I Masnadieri,' after Schiller's 'Raüber,' was given in London in 1847, and, notwithstanding a rare combination of great artists, Jenny Lind, Lablache, Gardoni, and Coletti, the success on the first evening, apparently great, was in reality very small, and the work soon disappeared from the repertoire. Jenny Lind sang her great air marvellously, and with a real and indisputable success. Lablache could not but sing well, and act in a superior manner. But without saying that this was the reason of the non-success, it cannot be denied that Lablache gave rise to inopportune merriment which was not conducive to success. In the libretto there is an old Moor, who has two sons, one a sneak, the other a wild noble-hearted boy who becomes chief of the brigands. The sneak remaining alone with his father, whose fortune he wishes to inherit, has him thrown into a tower and starved to death. Out of that tower the father suddenly comes in a certain scene. This father starved to a skeleton was Lablache, tall as a giant, and proportionately, even unproportionately stout. The effect his appearance produced upon the public can be

imagined. From that moment the result was doubtful, and Verdi left London deeply disappointed.

In 1851, at the Fenice at Venice, Verdi produced 'Rigoletto,' which created one of those furores which carry the name of a composer with electric power to the top of the column of glory. He himself had great hopes for his score, but he was afraid for the famous air, 'La Donna è mobile.' Being very easily retained, it might from the rehearsal get into the streets and be sung all over the town before the first performance, and he would then appear to have copied instead of having created the work. In order to prevent this possibility he did not let the tenor have his air. At last Mirate, fancying that Verdi had not written it, pressed him, and Verdi always said: 'C'è tempo—te lo darò' ('Time enough —you shall have it'); and at last, at the general rehearsal, he brought it. The air and the quartet above mentioned and the whole opera were soon the property of the whole world. In Paris a most amusing quarrel began between two papers—one, *La France musicale*, which praised every note of

Verdi to the sky, unreservedly, stupidly, with open partiality, so as even to make him enemies through this puffing injustice; the other, the *Gazette musicale*, which with nearly equal violence and injustice attacked him, so much so, that they said there was not a melody, not a *morceau d'ensemble* in 'Rigoletto,' which nevertheless contained some of the most popular airs the world has known, and the most admirable quartet. The *hinc illæ lachrymæ* was that both papers were owned by publishers. The *France* by the publisher of Verdi's works, the *Gazette* by the publisher of Meyerbeer's works. Their fighting only advertised the opera immensely, and thereby increased its fame. For very few people know how small is the difference of the effect produced by a long article of praise, or by a long article of abuse. Being discussed is the advantage, whereas not being spoken of is the danger.

Not two years after this eventful performance, Verdi produced (in the first week of the year 1853) 'Il Trovatore.' To say that 'Il Trovatore' conquered the world is not saying too much, because there is scarcely a village

in Europe or America where those tortures, against which fortunately an Act of Parliament does protect us, the barrel-organs, don't grind the 'Miserere' or 'Il Balen,' or some piece of that score. Let those who pretend that the first necessity for a successful opera is a good libretto, read the idiotic *exposé* of this 'Trovatore,' the first idea of which comes from an extremely interesting Spanish sketch of the same name, by a gifted youth only seventeen years old. Antonio Garcia Guttierez is the author of a book so excellent that one cannot imagine how it was possible for Piave to convert it into such rubbish, which, nevertheless, inspired Verdi with that treasure of sparkling melodies his score is studded with.

Paris, London, Rome, St. Petersburg, brought it out with the greatest artists the lyric stage has known. It is one of the most remarkable events of musical publication that this opera, which in single airs, in arrangements for all kinds of instruments, bands, quadrilles, waltzes, etc., yielded untold sums, brought not one penny of English money to its composer. No copyright! Just

as it happens to us all in America. I bought in New York, sometimes for ten, sometimes for twenty cents, the whole of a three-volume English novel. A man publishes in New York every Sunday a paper that costs about fourpence, and regularly gives in one or two numbers an English novel *honestly* acquired. I don't know how many thousands were sold of a certain novel of Miss Braddon's—neither she nor her publisher ever had a shilling for it. 'Les Cloches du Monastère,' a piano piece by Lefébure, sold to the tune of one million copies through the States, and nobody, neither the composer nor the American publishers, ever had a comparative bonus from it, since everybody printed it, being everybody's property, because it was nobody's. While the 'Trovatore' was being rehearsed at Rome, Verdi had nearly finished another opera—'La Traviata,' which was performed at Venice in March, 1855. The 'Traviata' is certainly his most melodious, most original, and least exaggerated work; it possesses at the same time the greatest of his qualities, and the fewest of his faults. Yet 'La Tra-

viata' made a complete fiasco, and Verdi wrote the following letter, as short as MacMahon's after the battle of Reichsoffen. MacMahon wrote: 'Je me suis battu toute la journée. J'ai perdu la bataille. Envoyez moi des provisions.' Verdi wrote: '"La Traviata," ieri sera, fiasco. È colpa mia o dei cantanti? Il tempo giudicherà' ('Last night, "Traviata," fiasco. Is the fault mine or the performers? Time will show'). Here, again, 'embonpoint' rendered the situation ridiculous. Mademoiselle Donatelli, an immensely stout woman, yet a good singer, played the 'Traviata.' When in the last act the doctor came to see the poor consumptive woman, she, falling on the floor in a fit, raised such a cloud of dust that the doctor became invisible, and the Venetians roared outright. Moreover, the tenor was so hoarse that he could barely be heard, and the baritone, imagining that his was only a secondary part, took no trouble with it, and the work was sacrificed.

The same thing happened in the same town to the 'Barbiere' of Rossini; and surely if there is a work that can stand a comparison of popularity with Mozart's 'Don Giovanni,'

it is Rossini's 'Barbiere.' The 'Traviata,' given a little later in Turin, created simply a sensation, because it was wonderfully executed, and there was not a stout woman who cried bitterly that consumption allowed her only a few more hours to live. The 'Traviata' met with the same brilliant reception at the Théâtre Lyrique, where Mademoiselle Christine Nilsson made her *début*, and, according to the expression of the famous critic, Arthur Pougin, instantly sent all Paris mad. Of the same misdemeanour towards the public of nearly every city in the world was Madame Patti guilty in the same *rôle*, and only lately she did a similar thing to the audiences of Spain and Portugal.

It would transgress the limits of a sketch like this to follow Verdi from opera to opera; suffice it that we come to the one he wrote for the French opera, 'Les Vêpres Siciliennes,' where Mademoiselle Sophie Cruvelli *created* the principal part, and perpetrated her famous flight during the first rehearsals. She came back, however, and ensured the success of the work and her own during the Exhibition of 1855, so that when she left the opera

to become Baronne Vigier, the principal charm seemed gone, and the opera, subsequently revived, had no lasting success. 'Habent sua fata libelli' is perfectly applicable to every work of art.

A very pleasant light is thrown on the character of Verdi by the following incident. When his old contributor Piave became very ill, Verdi, who had for years regularly supported him, placed a capital to the credit of his daughter, to be paid to her with accumulated interest on her coming of age, so that the old man had nothing to fear and could die in peace. It is significant of the man who was so kind to the weak, that he was inexorable with the strong and mighty, when they dared to demand of him what he would not do. In Naples he had written the well-known opera, 'Un ballo in Maschera.' In it a king was to be assassinated, which the censor would not permit, and forbade the work unless this scene was changed. Verdi said, 'I shall not allow one word to be changed; the opera shall be given as it is, or I withdraw it.' And he did. Then the manager of the theatre wanted to make him pay a heavy fine,

a trifle like £8,000, for supposed damages. But the whole town took his part. Somebody discovered that the initials of '*V*ittore *E*mmanuele, *R*e *D'I*talia,' formed the name VERDI; and thus his name became the war-cry of the Liberal party, and his popularity was thereby so increased that crowds of people surrounded him when he walked out; under the guise of homage to his genius, he became, so to say, a political centrepoint, and the government of King Bomba was only too happy to let him leave with his score without fine or damages.

In March, 1867, 'Don Carlos,' composed for the Paris Opera, was produced without especial success, and was then performed in London with much the same result. He had in the meantime been elected member of the French Academy in the place of Meyerbeer, a distinction well merited; and then member of Parliament for Busseto, which was perhaps not quite so appropriate; and Senator. The political career, for which he felt neither inclination nor talent, as he told the Italian Minister Cavour, he resigned after a few years. He would never have accepted it

at all, had not Cavour given him to understand that in the first Parliament he wished to see assembled by the side of the celebrities in politics all those who had made a great name in art and science. 'But I am not a politician,' said Verdi. 'Lend the country the weight of your name,' Cavour replied, who with the same gentle and skilful obstinacy by which he attained against tremendous odds the object of his life, the liberation of his country, insisted on having his will in anything that could even in a small measure contribute to the great end. So Verdi did for a short time what Cavour made him consider his duty.

The only really remarkable event yet to be mentioned in his artistic life is 'Aïda,' ordered, composed, and performed under sufficiently extraordinary circumstances to warrant going a little into details.

Ismail Pacha, Khedive of Egypt, a man of liberal, even luxurious taste—as we have since learned—had built a theatre at Cairo for Italian opera, and to give it particular éclat he was advised to ask Verdi for a new opera. He lost no time in so doing, and

Verdi, thinking it rather interesting to compose for an Egyptian potentate, was advised by a friend to ask four thousand pounds for the score, two thousand to be paid at once and the other two thousand on delivery of the MS. score, which was immediately conceded and eventually executed. Another two thousand pounds, which he stipulated as a compensation for his travelling to Cairo should he be required personally to superintend the work, was done away with, as it was not thought necessary to give him the trouble. So his pupil and friend Muzio was, with his full consent, entrusted to conduct the rehearsals and performance. The libretto, that is to say, the scenario of the opera, was sent to Verdi, the author being one of the most distinguished Frenchmen living in Egypt, Monsieur Mariette, who had directed highly important excavations in the Desert, and had in recognition of his great services obtained the title of Mariette Bey.

The idea pleased Verdi, and he got Monsieur du Locle to write the whole opera out after Mariette Bey's plan, scene for scene, verse for verse, superintending the work so

far that he took an active part in it. For instance, the last scene where Rhadames is condemned to be immured in the vault below, so that the spectator sees below and above, two stages over each other, is Verdi's own idea. He then set to work composing, and when he was nearly ready, an event happened which allowed him much more time than he thought he would have. The machinery was constructed at Cairo, the costumes and decorations were prepared in Paris. But in the meantime war had been declared between France and Germany, and the 'military promenade' to Berlin had taken the tragic turn of a promenade to Paris, and Paris was invested. The siege prevented all the necessary paraphernalia, prepared in that town, from being sent to Egypt; and for a whole year was the much-desired performance delayed. It was not until the end of the year 1871—strange to say, on Christmas Eve (Dec. 24)—that the first performance took place. The excitement was such that the last rehearsal but one took place *coram populo*, and at the general rehearsal the whole town, including the Khedive, was present. The

effect of the music was such that the Khedive instantly telegraphed his enchantment to Verdi, offering him any amount of money to come and conduct the first performance, including even the title of Bey, which Verdi was barbarian enough not to accept. The embarrassment was all the greater because Muzio, whom Verdi had so fully instructed, had in the meantime—on account of the year's delay — to fulfil another engagement, so that the conducting fell upon the shoulders of another musician, well known in London, Signor Bottesini, whose marvellous double-bass playing had so often delighted the English public. Strange to say, the certainty of success was such, that from France and from Italy newspaper correspondents arrived at once to chronicle the great event; and Verdi, the composer, whom you would have supposed to be the happiest of men, was positively unhappy about it. 'What *réclames*,' he writes to a friend, 'what beating of the tam-tam! why not let the work stand on its own merits? Oh how I regret the time when I was let alone, without any preparation, to go to the theatre, and the

public listened to the music, and if they liked it the success was genuine, sincere, without all this *mise en scène!* You think, perhaps, I should thank you for travelling so far; perhaps I should.'

As to the music, he had his doubts. It is well known that when the third act was ready he suddenly replaced a chorus he had written 'à la Palestrina,' in severe four-part style, by another chorus and an air for 'Aïda;' and he wrote anent this change to a friend that at the last moment he had his scruples about the danger of trying to *fare a la Palestrina*, and his misgivings about the strange harmonies and the Egyptian music. But he did not write strange Egyptian, but most excellent original music, in some parts even highly interesting counterpoint; and he did in 'Aïda' what both Meyerbeer and Rossini had done, passed from the superficial Italian cavatina and cabaletta style into the best French, and, if I may say so, Germanized operatic music. The difference between Meyerbeer's and Rossini's first flimsy style as compared with the grandeur of the 'Huguenots' and 'Guillaume Tell' is not greater than

the big stride which Verdi accomplished in searching for an original Oriental style, and producing a work which leaves all his other operas, if not in invention and melody, at any rate in dignity of style and treatment, far behind. The success, notwithstanding the music being so grand—I say notwithstanding advisedly, because usually the *plebs* run after flippant style and melody—was enormous. The audience arrived hours before the beginning; the prices for the few seats to be had attained fabulous proportions, and the aspect of the house was all the more interesting to the Europeans since they wanted to see those handsome, pale, dark-eyed Greeks, and the three boxes near the stage covered with white muslin, behind which sat the 'ladies of the Harem,' who could see through —but could not be seen. The Arabs themselves go only exceptionally to hear such music, which produces upon them the effect that Japanese music produces upon us. They were, however, so far interested that they went to the theatre, where they smoked with the grave solemnity which becomes Orientals who through their smoke stare at

the prominent inscription which forbids smoking.

Those who know the opera will remember the long, long trumpets, a most agreeable new invention for the triumphal march. Those trumpets were made use of to give Verdi, after the first performance of 'Aïda' at Milan, a serenade. At the same time a sceptre, similar to the one which the king bears in the opera, was presented to him, having a golden star with a big diamond on the top, the letters 'Aïda' in rubies, and his own name in brilliants, on a laurel leaf. In 'Aïda' not only is the music sung on the stage, and admirably draped in the orchestra, of great interest, but the ballet music is as original, as melodious, graceful and new, as any ever written. Verdi has shown himself in this opera a serious musician, and the stupid accusation which was at one time levelled at him that he was unacquainted with the great German master-works, even with 'Don Juan,' was made singularly *mal à propos.* I have personally heard him during a dinner-party at Rossini's, more than twenty years ago, speak with the most familiar knowledge

of German operatic works from Mozart to Wagner. 'Don Giovanni,' which was given in Milan more than fifty years ago, was conducted by Lavigna, then Verdi's master, who raved about the music, and, after the rehearsals, continually made Verdi read the music with him. I know that some people object to Verdi's rough manners, and especially in Paris, with their *minauderies*, they called him *un ours mal léché;* but he is, notwithstanding that rough exterior, though severe, even sulky sometimes, *au fond* as gentle and kind-hearted as a young girl; and has proved it many times, although he decidedly understands no joke when his dignity is concerned. When he came to superintend his 'Vêpres Siciliennes' at Paris, and the orchestra did not arrive for an additional rehearsal, and kept him waiting, he complained to the conductor, who said: 'Mon Dieu, ils ont autre chose à faire.' 'Ah!' said Verdi, 'they have something else to do than their duty?' And there and then he took his hat, left the theatre and Paris, and was seen no more. He refused, even years after that, a new invitation of the manager Halanzier, to come and

conduct 'Aïda' at the Grand Opera in French.

But an incident almost too funny happened with his 'Aïda' at Milan, and showed how kind-hearted he was, where any other man would probably have taken quite another view of the case. A young man had come from the country by rail to hear 'Aïda,' and had the coolness to write to Verdi :

'Sir,—I heard from so many people that your opera is a master-piece, that although relatively poor I have made the journey to Milan to hear it. I did not like it, and am convinced that were it not for the pomp on the stage it would not have lived through three performances. Coming home I heard other people speaking about it with enthusiasm. I therefore thought I would return a second time, to understand it better. But decidedly I don't like it, and this being so, and having wasted my time and my money, I enclose the bill of my expenses, 12s. 6d. each time, and confidently hope you will remit payment for it, because I had a frightful row with my people for this extravagance.'

Would you believe it? Verdi, who complained about the *réclame* which was made for his opera, actually wrote to Ricordi, and paid the man's travelling expenses, and the price of his stall, taking a receipt in which he had to pledge himself not to treat this indulgence as a precedent for any future demand of the same kind.

On the death of Rossini, Verdi, who was as deeply concerned at Rossini's death as Rossini was at Meyerbeer's, formed a plan which, however, he could not execute. It was that a Requiem mass of thirteen pieces, composed by thirteen Italian composers, should be performed in honour of Rossini at Bologna, and that the Pope should be petitioned on this occasion to permit ladies to sing in the church. Whether because this exception was refused, or from any other reason, the affair never came off, and Verdi used the piece which he had sent as his contribution, 'Libera me,' for the Requiem which he then wrote for Manzoni, the famous author of the 'Promessi Sposi.'

This Requiem, and a Quartet for stringed instruments, which Verdi composed afterwards,

were his latest known compositions; but he has since then composed an opera, 'Othello,' the words by Boito. This opera is to be brought out next year both in Italy and in France, where the composer has just lately been to see what artists he could engage for the performance.

There are not many published letters of Verdi's. Yet he has written two which are in their contents too important to be passed over. One he wrote to decline the Directorship of the Naples Conservatoire, because he could not devote all the time he considered necessary for the conscientious fulfilment of the duties; but while writing it he entered into the system of teaching and the necessity for pupils to study the old masters, and he concludes with this memorable sentence: 'Return to the classics; that will be progress.' The other letter has a special object, viz., the pitch, the inconveniences of which Verdi, like every man of common-sense, declares to be, firstly, the difference singers meet with in every country, and then the unnatural height. The finest and most sympathetic means of producing music is the human

voice. Every instrument can be screwed up, or shortened—every string mounted to any height, and if it breaks you can take a new one; but when you break the human voice you cannot put new vocal cords under the larynx. Verdi says, with perfect reason: 'There ought to be one pitch all the world over, and there ought to be no pitch higher than the normal one adopted in France.' This is clear and logical.

If I now add that Verdi has written twenty-six operas, numerous other scores, among which are not only the Quartet and the Requiem already mentioned, but some hundred military marches, and many pieces for the Philharmonic Society of Busseto before he came to Milan; when I say that he never did a *tour de force*, like Rossini, and wrote an opera in a fortnight, or like Donizetti, who wrote the 'Daughter of the Regiment' in thirteen days, but that he always took four to six months; that he is firm and strong-willed, thoroughly honourable and charitable, so reserved that nobody knows the good he does; that he is fond of solitude and hates puff of every kind; that

he is just and severe towards himself as well as to others, and that he never flatters anybody, nor does he wish or like anyone to flatter him; that in all his greatness and glory he remains single-hearted and devoted to his friends and his family—I hope that I have given a faithful pen-and-ink sketch of the last of the great Italian composers—Giuseppe Verdi.

PERFORMERS.

THALBERG.

SIGISMOND THALBERG, one of the most successful virtuosi of this century, was born at Geneva—according to his biographer, Mendel, on May 5; according to Fétis, on January 7; but according to a brother of his, now established at Vienna, who gave me the authentic date, on February 7, 1812. Being the son of Prince Dietrichstein, who had many wives without ever being married, Thalberg had several brothers of different family names. The one just mentioned is Mr. Leitzinger, three months older than Thalberg—a fact which speaks for itself. Another half-brother of his is Baron Denner. Thalberg's mother was the Baroness Wetzlar, a highly-educated lady, full of talent, and who took the greatest care of Thalberg's early educa-

tion. In Geneva he remained in the Pension Siciliewski under the guidance of a governess, Madame Denver, and under the superintendence of his mother. Madame Denver and Mr. Müller—a Frenchman, although his name seems German—took Thalberg to Vienna to his father's palace. He was then just ten years old.

He arrived at Vienna as Vienna was sixty years ago—very different from what it is now. Vienna then, with a view to successful defence of the town against a possible siege, was surrounded by a bastion (Bastei) very high walls, and a deep entrenchment (Stadtgraben), to be filled with water at the mere approach of would-be storming beleaguers. Within this limited circle lay what is now called the inner city : a crowd of narrow streets and but a few squares. The whole Ring, the pride of to-day's city, with its rows of palaces, gardens and broad streets, built upon the very place where the bastion and the surrounding entrenchment once lay, did not at that time exist. Prince Dietrichstein's palace, above mentioned, stood, however, outside the town, or what was then

considered the town — outside the inner walls.

The Prince was so fond of his boy that he gave up an Ambassadorial appointment to devote all his time to 'Sigi's' (this was his pet name) education. Thalberg early showed a great aptitude for music and for languages, and was destined by his father to become a diplomatist, and, with a view to this end, had the best masters to teach him. If a friendly—perhaps too friendly—source is to be credited, he made rapid progress, especially in Greek and geography, which no doubt explains the curious collection of maps with which Thalberg adorned his room at Naples. His first success dates back so far as 1826, when he was fourteen years old, and played at an evening party at Prince Clemens Metternich's, the then master of the diplomatic world, and who once replied to a lady, a great patroness of music, who could not understand that he should not be fond of music, 'Oh, madame, je ne la crains pas!'

Some one present at an evening party at the same Prince Metternich's house on the Ballplatz, told me that there the same thing

happened fifty years ago which took place at Leeds in 1883. Gas adapted to illuminating private houses had just been invented, and the Prince gave the first great evening party with a profusion of that brilliant light. As the clock struck midnight a lady in ecstasy remarked: 'I hope no evil spirit (kein böser Geist) will spoil our pleasure: it *is* so pretty!' when suddenly, as if the invocation had called forth some ill-behaved witch, the whole suite of apartments was plunged in darkness; and nobody having dreamt of such a possibility, no wax candles were anywhere to be found, and not only was the ball suddenly brought to an end, but it is easy to imagine the confusion and complications consequent upon the sudden calamity. So at Leeds in October, during the festival, the hall, lighted up with electricity, suddenly paled to grey from the brilliant white light it had just enjoyed; but the honorary secretary, not waiting for the grey in its turn to become black, rushed out and got the gas turned on, which fortunately had been kept in reserve. It is noteworthy that since that time there has never been an evening party given at the Palais Metternich without

half the illumination relying upon the always safe wax candles, which shows once more that there is nothing new even under the electric sun.

Various are the stories about Thalberg's piano teachers; but it is certain that he was taught by Mittag, and that the great organist and harmonist, Sechter, the first German who simplified and most clearly demonstrated the principles of harmony, taught him counterpoint. Fétis, whose information is especially doubtful with regard to German composers, gives many details of Thalberg which he took no trouble to verify. Czerny never taught Thalberg, but he gave five or six lessons to Franz Liszt. In Vienna are a number of professors who pretend to have instructed both Liszt and Thalberg. But just as a poor man, who leaves his village friendless and uncared for, the moment he succeeds in making a great fortune in a big city, suddenly finds himself surrounded by a number of cousins and nephews whose existence is news to him, so masters spring up like the armed men from the dragon's teeth, when an artist becomes a celebrity. The first occasion on

which Thalberg became known to Europe was in 1833, at a *soirée* of Count Apponyi's, then Austrian Ambassador at Paris. Thalberg was just twenty-one years old, of an extremely agreeable, aristocratic appearance, refined manners, and very witty; only a trifle too much given to making puns, an amusement rather easy in French, and which foreigners are too easily induced to indulge in. One day I passed with him through Regent Circus, when he saw at Peter Robinson's a piece of yellow silk (*foulard*). He asked me: 'I want to make you a present. Shall I get you a dress-coat made of this? Ah,' he added, 'I have it: I'll give you an umbrella; that is the most appropriate thing to offer *en cadeau*.' 'How so?' I asked. 'Why, of course,' he replied, 'the most appropriate—*en cas d'eau!*' Kind-hearted, and uncommonly careful not to say an incautious word against anybody or ever to hurt any man's feelings, he became at once the ladies' pet—and what that means in Paris those who know French society will not undervalue.

He was an innovator on the piano, though

not of the first rank; he invented forms, notably effects. He had wonderfully constructed fingers, the tips of which were real little cushions. This formation and very persevering study enabled Thalberg to produce such wonderful *legatos*, that Liszt said of him, 'Thalberg est le seul pianiste qui joue du violon sur le clavier.' When he played for the first time in public, in Vienna, in 1829, his touch and his expression at once conquered the audience, but even then principally the ladies. In Paris his winning manners and his carefully guided education, which with a very adroit modesty he knew how to show, though seeming to conceal it, contributed as much as his talent to render him the talk of the day. It must, however, not be surmised that his execution, although it could not stand the test of comparison with that of the Attila of the piano, Liszt, nor with the dreamy, attractive poetry of Chopin, was by any means ordinary.

It is not true that, as a great *calembouriste* pretended, Thalberg attained his high position 'in play' (*en jouant*). He was so fond of music that he overcame Prince Dietrich-

stein's preconceived idea of a diplomatic career, only by dint of earnest study and determination. He often left his bed at three o'clock in the morning to practise on his piano, and those who heard him privately and knew him intimately, were in a much better position to appreciate the extraordinary difficulties he was able to overcome, than those who only heard him play his compositions in public. It was one of the reproaches which classical but tedious players heaped upon him, that 'he did not play the great masters, but that he only shone in public with his own compositions.' Yet when he played Beethoven it did not 'amuse' the audience of that day, and he lived before all for success, for his own personality. Among great piano-players, it should be said of him as Catalani said of Sontag : 'His *genre* was not great, but he was great in his *genre*.'

Thalberg was amiable, both as a man and a performer. His position, highly recommended as he was, and supported in society by Prince Dietrichstein, who generously endowed him with £20,000 and launched him among his powerful connections, was of course excep-

tional. It was one of the curious anomalies so often observable in life, that although he so earnestly preached against the mania of the century of sacrificing everything to effect, the gist of *his* art, the aim and purpose of all his musical studies, was nothing but to produce effect. That he was, musically speaking, of a most sympathetic, attractive, even irresistible organization, it would be difficult to deny; but it is, above all, skill and education which his piano compositions show, which, although influenced by Liszt's brilliancy and Chopin's florid style, are yet much more valuable than his orchestral and operatic compositions, which totally failed. He was a celebrated man for many reasons, only one of which was his executive talent, and his successful endeavour to sing on the piano. It is a well-known fact that Madame Malibran, after hearing him play one evening, sang in a manner which astonished even her most ardent admirers. She made no secret of the reason of this extraordinary effort, which was caused by the excitement which the brilliancy and elegance of Thalberg's performance had produced.

As a composer of operas, two events in his life are notorious, and both very unfortunate. His opera 'Christina' was a dead failure. 'Florinda,' which was performed under Balfe's direction in London in 1851, with Cruvelli, Sims Reeves, and Lablache, was, as an eyewitness states, found by the best critics of the time unpleasing, difficult to sing, uninteresting. Even the song, the only hit of the evening, and which was so well sung by Sims Reeves that it created a genuine success, was, to say the least, not a pretty one. Certainly, whatever society could do to help, was done. The Queen and Prince Albert headed a most brilliant assembly, and everything was prepared to make the work acceptable, but the thin stuff of the score could not be sustained. Besides, that which ruined Flotow's 'Undine,' happened here also. The curtain went down before the close, and after nearly everybody had left their seats, up went the curtain again, and Sims Reeves was discovered rescuing Madame Cruvelli from the flames. The story was badly told, the music was thin and incredibly devoid of interesting ideas, and so the fate of

the opera was sealed. It was asserted, by Thalberg's friends, that to Madame Cruvelli the absence of success was largely due. Not being pleased with her rôle, it is said, she deliberately sacrificed it, and at one moment even hummed instead of singing her air; so that a person sitting in the front row of the stalls, behind Balfe, heard him call out to Cruvelli, 'Sing properly, for if you do not respect yourself, you ought at least to respect the audience, among whom there is her Majesty the Queen.'

What Madame Cruvelli was capable of doing when her blood was up, an event but too likely to occur with that capricious, spoiled child of the Paris world, she has several times most effectually shown. On the night of the first appearance of 'l'Étoile du Nord' at the Opéra Comique, Madame Cruvelli had a quarrel with a journalist (Fiorentino by name). She entered her box, which was exactly opposite the Emperor Napoleon III.'s state box, in an ill-humour. Not having the slightest regard to the common courtesy due, not only to the Emperor, but to the ladies in his box, she deliberately

put her feet on the border of her box, as much as to say: 'I do not care for the whole audience;' and when an aide-de-camp of the Emperor came to her and told her that she prevented the Emperor from admiring her tasteful toilette, which was certainly a very courteous way of drawing her attention to her bad manners, she saucily remarked: 'Dites à l'Empereur de ne pas regarder; cela n'en vaut pas la peine.' Had a singer sent such a reply to the Emperor Nicholas she would have had to quit the capital next morning; but the Emperor Napoleon laughed at her 'advice,' and what makes the affair still prettier, is that when, a very short time after, he met her at a great musical *soirée*, and she was in a more amiable mood, he asked her: 'Dites-moi donc, Madame Cruvelli, quelle mouche vous a piquée le soir de la première de l'Étoile du Nord?' 'Au pied?' she replied. 'Your Majesty does not know all the annoyances and vexations of an artist's life; and it would be difficult for me to say how sorry I was not to be able to restrain my suffering better.' Saying these words she looked, like the great actress she was, so

concerned and downcast before the Emperor that he said to her: 'Mais vous avez une si jolie main, et vous ne portez jamais de bague! Essayez donc si celle-ci va vous porter bonheur.' Saying which he took from his finger a magnificent diamond ring, and placed it himself on her hand. That was her punishment!

I will, however, defend her from another charge which has been brought against her. One evening when the 'Huguenots' was announced at the Grand Opéra, then situated in the Rue Lepelletier, Cruvelli bolted, and the audience, after having waited until 8.30 (the opera was announced to begin at 7.15), had to take their money back. An old Minister, then of great influence, had surreptitiously invaded her dressing-room, and she had after a vigorous discussion ejected him with such violence, that, afraid of the consequences, five minutes after, she fled to Venice; from whence she had to be brought back by a special messenger, armed with a letter from the Emperor, who assured her of his continued favour, and with a letter from the Minister in question, who pledged his word that not only

should she not pay the penalty usually attached to such cases of insubordination, but that she had nothing whatever to fear in the capital. So she was always victorious in the end, whether she was right or wrong.

But if Thalberg was not successful on the stage, it is but fair to say that his compositions for the piano not only contained novel effects, both in form and arrangement, but real invention. He had the talent, through adroit use of the pedal and new combinations, to make you believe that you heard two performers at the same time.

A catalogue of his piano compositions comprises sixty-five numbers, many of which earned glory and money for their author, and stamped him as a specialist for his instrument, the complicated effects of which nobody had ever better understood. In order to explain the sensation which Thalberg produced with these works, it would perhaps be best to listen to one of the most competent judges and critics: Robert Schumann, who, himself a pianist of no mean order and a composer of great merit, was the very best authority to whom we could look for an able and just

opinion. Schumann moreover was one of the composers for whom Thalberg had conceived a perfect enthusiasm, although their natures, both as musicians and men, so widely differed. Thalberg was the most amiable *causeur;* Schumann was as silent as Field Marshal Count Moltke, of whom the Emperor of Germany said last year: 'My Moltke is silent in seven languages' ('schweigt in sieben Sprachen'). Thalberg was the man of society, of luxury, the man for the ladies; Schumann was a man of the simplest tastes, who never felt lonely except 'in society.' It is undeniable that until 1830 the performers of Mozart, Beethoven, Hummel, Moscheles, etc., submitted their talents to the interpretation of the composer, whereas afterwards arose that most unjustifiable habit of sacrificing the composer to the virtuoso. A French critic said of Thalberg, that he had estranged the piano from its natural use, and made of it something outside real music ('en dehors de la musique'). It is difficult to see what the use of a musical instrument can be turned to if not to music, except that Thalberg may be said to have used the composition too much as a means of

showing off his *bravura*. But this is done every day, and although not less reprehensible on that account, it cannot be said to be a proceeding 'outside real music.'

As I have before mentioned, Prince Dietrichstein had settled a capital of £20,000 on Thalberg, who married, at Paris, not, as Fétis states, in 1845, but in 1843, Madame Boucher, the daughter of the famous Lablache, and the widow of a painter of merit who had been decorated with the Legion of Honour by the French Government for his picture 'La Mort du Maréchal Marceau.' Thalberg travelled through Belgium, Holland, England, and Russia in 1839, and Spain in 1845; and he went to Brazil in 1855; North America in 1856; and finally settled at Posilippo (Naples) in 1858. He appeared again in public in 1862, and in London in 1863 in the concerts arranged for him by his brother-in-law, Frederick Lablache, after which he lived in Naples as an 'Oeconom' and wine-grower.

The writer of these lines saw him in his house in that wonderfully picturesque position overlooking the Bay of Naples, opposite San

Agata, and, when taken by Thalberg all over the property, he could nowhere discover a trace of a piano. He had become famous through his music; he now wanted to make money, and money only, with his wines. His daughter (not by his legitimate wife, but by an Italian singer, Madame d'Angri) resembles him much. She destroyed what seemed a promising career as a prima donna by singing too early and straining her voice in parts too high for her *tessitura*, both common faults with present singers, who are always too anxious to reap before they have sown, and before they have properly prepared, trained, and developed their voices by careful study, because they fancy that shouting high notes to elicit injudicious applause will make them celebrated singers. They utterly forget that the great models of Italian singers so much admired in this century owed their great glory and fortunes to a conscientious, persevering preparation, and to the sacrifice of every enjoyment which interfered with the earnest fulfilment of their artistic duties. Patti, the only great singer left, is so careful to avoid anything of the kind, that I heard

her postpone taking a certain medicine till after the season, because she was afraid it might momentarily affect her voice.

Schumann, in an access of ill-humour ('böser Laune'), says that Thalberg keeps him in a certain tension of expectancy, not on account of the platitudes which are sure to come, but on account of the profound manner of their introduction, which warns you always of the moment they are on the point of bursting upon you. He says: 'Thalberg deceives you by brilliant hand and finger work in order to pass off his weak thoughts, and it is an interesting question to see how long the world will be pleased to put up with such mechanical music.' It was Thalberg's Concerto which so irritated Schumann, who was afraid that in Paris, where celebrities are always spoilt, he might not sufficiently take heed of what more serious composers had there achieved, and that he would be led away by the pardonable weakness of preferring 'the charming mortality of a flattered virtuoso's life to the questionable after-glory of a real composer's work.' Whilst Madame Schumann was playing one of Thalberg's

waltzes, Schumann laid a few roses on the desk, which accidentally slipped down on the keyboard. By a sudden jump of the left hand in the bass Madame Schumann wounded her little finger with one of the thorns. To her anxiously inquiring lord she replied that nothing much was the matter, only a very slight accident, and that light as the waltzes was the wound, causing no great suffering, only a few drops of blood, provoked by rose-thorns.

Although those waltzes of Thalberg are not what you would call Viennese waltzes, yet they show that thoroughly Viennese element, quite monopolized in that city, that hidden spring which through the left hand irresistibly lifts the dancer's foot. The Viennese, and the Viennese only, know how to dance, how to play, and how to write waltzes. Strauss's orchestra is unequalled in that respect, and with no orchestra but a Viennese one could he perform them thus. The waltz is their idol, and it has been reproachfully stated by serious observers that the mass of them—of course, there is no question about the *élite*, who are as studious, as serious, as laborious as the *élite* of the nation

anywhere else—are so thoroughly Epicurean, that they live for eating and dancing only.

When the battle of Sadowa was lost, which at once and for ever threw Austria out of Germany, and brought it to the very feet of Prussia, which Austria used to look down upon rather haughtily, the sad news reached Vienna early in the morning; and the despair of the people, who were quite heart-broken, was absolutely universal. That lasted until three in the afternoon, when the terrible probability of Strauss's ball being countermanded diverted the attention of the politically stricken people, who began to think which would be the more awful calamity: the loss of the battle or the suspension of the ball. The afternoon passed in dreadful suspense, but the ball bills remained uncovered with the dreaded postponement. Then philosophy came to the aid of the young ladies, and from them spread to the young men. Would Austria regain German influence by their not dancing? Would Sadowa not be a sad and accomplished fact whether they cried at home or not? Was it not best to bear up

courageously and to gain strength by exercise? Thus good counsel prevailed, and the day that had dawned with consternation and despair heard the famous $\frac{3}{4}$ in the evening, and the tears dried on those pretty young cheeks glowing with excitement over the 'Blue Danube.' Hurrah for joy and youth! Take life easily! it lasts not one minute longer for all your sulking; say, like Maffio Orsini:

> 'Scherzo e bevo,
> Derido gl' insani,
> Che si dan
> Del futuro pensier.'

('I laugh and drink, and mock at people insane enough to care for what the future may bring.') So much for dancing. As for eating, I have the authority of an aide-de-camp of the Emperor Francis, who reigned over Austria during the Napoleonic wars, that his Majesty stood by the oven one day, there being no open fires at that time in Austria, when Count E——, covered with mud, burst into the Burg (the Imperial palace) and demanded an immediate audience of the Emperor. Brought into the presence

of his Majesty, the following colloquy ensued:

'Well, what is the matter?'

'Your Majesty, I come from the battle-field, and I am grieved to say with terrible news.'

'What has happened?'

'A battle has been fought, and——'

'Well?'

'And we are routed; the battle is lost.'

'Lost? Quite lost?'

'Yes, your Majesty, quite lost.'

'Nothing to be done? Nothing?'

'Your Majesty, I am deeply sorry to say, nothing.'

'What, absolutely nothing? . . . Let us go to dinner!'

Thalberg's first Caprice (E minor) contains a well-developed principal thought, and forms a piece sure to win loud approbation. It is not always a proof of the excellence of a composition that it produces a great effect under the hand of the composer. All that it proves is the skill of the performer, and Schumann expresses the wish that Thalberg might furnish for the appreciation of the critic a piece

thoroughly and equally well written—not a piece here and there well written and abounding in weak parts, seemingly written by a man who had only done this work because he had no other occupation. It is impossible here not to recall to mind the words with which Baron Rothschild, of Frankfort, introduced Thalberg to a rich banker of his acquaintance: 'This is Mr. Thalberg, the great pianist; but, thanks to the Lord, he does not want it' ('hat's Gott sei Dank, nicht nöthig'). Schumann's wrath somehow relents when speaking of Thalberg's Variations on two Russian *motivos* — 'Krasni sarafan' (red petticoat), which is not, as Schumann presumes, the 'touching prayer of a child for a garment,' a supposition disproved by the very first words of the song: 'A red petticoat *gave* me my mother,' the second theme being 'Boje Tsarja chranjee' ('God save the Czar'). Schumann thought the introduction, through which, every now and then, 'the child's song appears like an angel's head,' fanciful and effective. Equally tender and flexible are the variations, very musician-like, well-flowing, and altogether

well rounded off. The *finale*, so short that the audience is sure to listen whether or no there is nothing more to follow before they are expected to explode in spontaneous applause, is graceful, brilliant, noble indeed.' These expressions seem certainly enthusiastic enough, and scarcely bear out the severity of his judgment when discoursing on the general qualities of the composer of the concerto.

As to Thalberg's Fantasias on motivos of the 'Huguenots,' and on Rossini's 'Mosè in Egitto,' the friends of Erard, the French piano-maker, fancied that Thalberg, who had treated the 'Huguenots' Fantasia in the way marked out by himself, had written the brilliant octave repetition variation only for the purpose of showing off the *double échappement* of Erard. This is not likely. Thalberg was not so self-sacrificing. He had one thing in view, and one only—to find new forms, new effects, new surprises for the public. Schumann says that in this fantasia Thalberg reminds him of Goethe's saying: 'Happy are those who by their birth are lifted beyond the lower stratum of humanity, who need not pass through those anxieties which many

a good man has to put up with all his life. Look at Thalberg! how entirely is he master of his language and his thoughts! What a man of the world! How easily does he entwine and undo the meshes! To him is known the smallest pulsation of the public, and he calculates his effects, now exciting, now calming his audience; and thus nothing remains but boldly to confirm the enthusiasm excited by this fantasia in Paris.'

Thalberg had the great art of composing works much more difficult in appearance than in reality. Just as Rossini knew so well how to write for the voice, Thalberg knew how to write for the finger—I might say, to give the finger a voice. His studies, incomparably easier than those of Moscheles and Chopin, sound as brilliantly as if they required the most persevering study to overcome their difficulties. That makes them grateful to play and pleasing to listen to. It has been said of the 'Etudes' that they are graceful work for ladies, but not for vigorous men, 'for the tepid temperature of the drawing-room,' not for the healthy atmosphere outside the house. Yet those

who will take the trouble to master them entirely, will find that they have thereby acquired some useful knowledge. Chopin's studies are more poetical, Cramer's are more matter of fact, Moscheles' are more difficult to conquer. Thalberg wrote essentially Thalberg. His studies and his *art du chant* are only specimens of what *he* could do best. They display in one form or another his full, light, energetic, and singing touch. His studies are the essence of his successes, of his glory, and of his industrious hard work.

Thalberg was eminently the pianist of the French, who in art, politics, and life are governed by only one desire, '*Autre chose!*' It has often been said, and I think quite rightly, that what makes the French revolt against the *status quo* is not that they are dissatisfied with it, but that they want 'something else' whatever they may have. Thalberg then was continually devising some surprising new effect, and thereby he was forced to find at every moment '*autre chose.*' It would not be courteous to the French ladies to say that that is just what suits their fickle nature, and that they too are in per-

petual search of the 'something else;' yet Schumann, who knew human nature well, says, that to criticize Thalberg would be to risk the revolt against you of all French, German, and foreign ladies. A contemptuous smile of the great French critics is all you would have for your pains. 'Why does he not deserve all the crowns and wreaths he was adorned with? Whoever wishes to progress and create new things must, before all, know what is going on around him; Strauss as well as Beethoven, because Strauss is in his way the highest expression of his time. Thalberg sheds the lustre of his performance on whatever he may play, Beethoven or Dussek, Chopin or Hummel. He has melody in the way of the Italians, from eight bars to eight bars. He knows wonderfully well how to dress his melodies, and much might perhaps be said about the difference between a real composition and a conglomeration of that new-fashioned style; but there again the army of young ladies advance, and so nothing remains for us to say but, "He is a god," when seated before the piano.'

'The only way,' continues Schumann, 'to

get at the real value of a composition, is to undress it, and when the jewellery, the brilliant, blinding embellishments are gone, then see what remains, what nature has done for it.'

Thalberg, like Beriot, once took a grand motif of Beethoven's and distorted it into 'effective variations.' This enraged Schumann, as it would every true musician. But then, Thalberg had a certain mission of elegance and effect, to pour a rain of rose-buds and rose-diamonds into the eager listener's ear—enchant him for the moment, and demand no more. His Viennese nature showed brilliantly in his waltzes, which were more really, more thoroughly, more undeniably waltz motives, and breathed much more the national type than Chopin's Mazurkas and Liszt's Hungarian Csardas, because Liszt and Chopin became thoroughly French in Paris, whilst Thalberg preserved his Austrian nature; and to the Austrians belongs, as I said before, the special talent of composing, of dancing, and of playing waltzes.

It is interesting to learn the opinion of

Mendelssohn and Rubinstein, those two great authorities in piano and in composition, on the relative merits of Liszt and Thalberg. Mendelssohn in his letters speaks of the 'heathenish scandal (Heidenscandal),' in the good and the bad sense of the word, created by Liszt at Leipsic. He declares Thalberg's calm ways and self-control much more worthy of the real virtuoso. Now compare with this Liszt's opinion of himself. Liszt has been heard to say, after Thalberg's immensely successful concerts given at Vienna on his return from Paris, that 'he hoped to play as Thalberg did, whenever he (Liszt) should be partly paralyzed and limited to the use of one hand.'

Mendelssohn goes on to say in his comparison of the two men, that Liszt's compositions are *beneath* his performance, since before all 'he lacks ideas of his own,' all his writing aiming only at showing off his skill, whereas Thalberg's 'Donna del Lago,' for instance, is a work of the most brilliant effect, a work of astonishing gradual increase of difficulties and ornamentation, and of refined taste in every bar! 'His wrist (seine Faust) is as

remarkable as the light deftness of his fingers. Yet Liszt's immense execution (Technik) is undeniable.' Now set against this what Rubinstein said, when he was asked why in a programme of his recital he had put Thalberg's 'Don Juan' Fantasia immediately after Liszt's fantasia on motivos of the same opera: 'Pour bien faire ressortir la différence entre cet épicier et le Dieu de la musique.' It is unnecessary to point out that Liszt was with Rubinstein the *Dieu de la musique*, and Thalberg the *épicier!* Never, perhaps, have the merits of any two pianists given rise to more violent and sometimes more amusing discussions.

It happened at Vienna on one occasion, in my presence, that two gentlemen had rather warm arguments as to who was the greater pianist of the two, when one of the two combatants had suddenly to admit that he had *never heard either of them!* Tableau! So Mendelssohn, in speaking of the critics who compare those pianists, says: 'They talk like two men who are both wrong, and whom you die to interrupt at every sentence.' Thalberg, in appearance a perfect aristocrat,

never moved a muscle above his elbows. His body remained in one position, and whatever difficulties he had to render, he was, or at any rate he appeared to be, unmoved, calm, master of the keyboard, and what is more difficult, of himself. Liszt, with his long hair flying about at every arpeggio or scale, not to mention his restlessness when playing rapid octaves, studied his public, nevertheless, very diplomatically. He kept the audience well under his eye, he was not above playing certain little comedies, and he was happy to afford opportunities for scenes to be played by the audience ; for instance, to allow ladies to throw themselves upon a glove of his, expressly forgotten on the piano, which they tore to shreds, and then divided among themselves as relics.

That may appear very foolish on the part of these ladies—as small, perhaps, on their part as on his. But they considered everything that he had touched, the moment they could lay their hands on it, sacred property, and—honesty among thieves — they fairly divided the spoil among themselves. Stealing, the Greeks said, is no crime, and can-

not be punished, on condition that you are clever enough not to allow yourself to be detected. Those who were caught were hanged; that was the law, not for stealing, but for being found out. Enlightened philosophers like Proudhon even went so far as to say that possession is theft. His famous work, 'La Propriété c'est le Vol,' is well known. But I have known a greater philosopher than that. He was a Jew, and a tailor in a Russian provincial town. To him I went one day when I wanted a waistcoat for a ball. I was then very young, and thought a vast deal of a white silk waistcoat with silver buttons. So I went and communicated my wishes to him. But Moses sadly shook his head, and said he had no such material by him, when suddenly I espied a small piece of white silk embroidered with silver, evidently a piece of some old material for covering furniture. Instantly I resolved that this should cover my impatient heart, and I asked him would it be sufficient for a waistcoat, and what would it cost? I waited his decision with more anxiety than the verdict of a jury. Slowly came his words: 'I think

I might possibly do it. The price would be twenty silver roubles.' 'What,' I exclaimed indignantly, 'twenty roubles for this piece of silk? I bet my head, you thief, that you never bought it. It looks as if you had stolen it—this is no stuff for waistcoats.' Barely had I said the word, than I regretted having libelled him. But no such degrading thought crossed the mind of Moses; and the son of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob rose to the occasion as follows: 'Stolen, you say? Of course I have stolen it; but not for you—for me.' What could I say? Opinions as to *meum* and *tuum* will differ so long as the globe turns in the spheres. Liszt, too, had no small scruples; he rather encouraged such theft. It was an opportunity for a sensational paragraph.

Thalberg thoroughly disdained such a petty course. Liszt heaped, as Mendelssohn and Schumann said, difficulty upon difficulty so as to furnish himself with a pretext for vanquishing them with his astounding mechanism. Excepting his smaller works, the arrangements of Schubert's songs, Rossini's *soirées musicales*, etc., or the little 'Lucia'

Fantasia, which so pleased Mendelssohn with its arpeggios and shakes for the left hand, there are very few pieces by Liszt that *le commun des martyrs* of the pianist-world could even attempt to play. In his 'Puritani' Fantasia, and others, there are sometimes shakes for the last two fingers, extending over several printed pages, while the other fingers have totally different occupations, which he himself played divinely, his shake with the little finger being most stupendous —but who else could do it? His concertos, unpleasing and unmusical, require a strength and execution very rarely to be met with; moreover, they are not grateful; while Thalberg's compositions are so to a high degree.

But if Thalberg was a thorough Viennese with his waltzes and his gay humour, he was a thorough artist all the same. Some of Liszt's fantasias, except the brilliant passages which dazzle the ear, even as tinsel dazzles the eye, are so wanting in real body, that they remind you of a certain sparkling claret, with a fine ruby colour but no warmth and no real stuff in it; or of that dinner that the

miserly widow of a rich Austrian banker offered to a celebrated journalist, where there was so little given him to eat that he actually was hungry at the end of the meal. So when the lady of the house most courteously said to him, 'I have been very happy to see you here, my dear sir ; when will you do me the honour to dine with me again ?' 'Now, at once,' he replied, to her amazement. Just so do these fantasias leave you with an unsatisfied appetite, eager for the meal to come.

In Thalberg's works, first of all, you find the fundamental basis of all music : singing. Where there is not one of those graceful little 'andante cantabile' which he ordinarily puts in the beginning of his pieces, one finger is sure to sing a motif which the others in varied modes accompany. Whether the figure be that of chromatic scales as in the Andante, or the motif surrounded with arpeggios like 'Mosè,' or interwoven in scales like the minuet of 'Don Giovanni,' or changing hands as in the 'Airs Russes,' or specially arranged for the left hand to play the motif, with accompanying chords written

on a second line, while the right hand plays a brilliant variation noted on a third line—as in his Fantasia on 'God save the Queen'—you always hear the two hands doing the work of three, sometimes you imagine that of four hands.

In Thalberg's Andante in D flat, he moreover imitated most elegantly and successfully the fioriture with which Chopin so dearly loved to adorn his plaintive melodies.

Photography not having at that time taken the place in the artistic world it now occupies, the likenesses of artists depended on the skill of an engraver, like the wonderful portrait of Jenny Lind, engraved forty years ago at Vienna. Then came the grand time for the lithographers. Kaiser and the famous Kriehuber made the most successful portraits both of Thalberg and Liszt, especially of the latter, who courted advertisement of every kind, as much as Thalberg treated it as beneath his dignity. Kriehuber made a charming group of Liszt, with Czerny, Ernst and Berlioz (including himself), and exhibited it at one of Liszt's night concerts (given between midnight and two a.m.). He made

a splendid portrait, too, of Thalberg, though this portrait enjoyed very little publicity, because Thalberg never encouraged hero-worship, on which Liszt fed so gluttonously. Thalberg was every inch a gentleman; Liszt, although the greatest pianist this century has known, undoubtedly a genius of interpretation, had nevertheless an undeniable admixture of charlatanism, and he played an uninterrupted comedy before the public, continually calculating his effects. Thalberg controlled and dominated that fire which seemed to consume Liszt. He loved his art more than himself; it verily seems to have been the reverse with Liszt.

PAGANINI.

NICOLO PAGANINI was the greatest violin-player both of old and modern times, and his performances created such a sensation among artists and amateurs, that no ordinary description of his talent could satisfactorily explain it. Supernatural reasons were adduced to show how it was possible that mortal man should master an instrument to such a degree as to command tears and laughter, amazement and perplexity. Nicolo Paganini, who was called not only the Apollo, but the Mephisto of the violin, came into the world heralded by a most angelic dream of his mother, wherein seraphs descended with their white wings to the couch of mater Paganini, to predict the advent of a child

whose bow would wound more hearts than that of Cupid himself, and who would astonish the world with his unprecedented artistic greatness.

His father was a poor man, but was musical, and he wished his son to learn music. Nicolo, his second son, born in 1784, seemed to do so without effort, and his father, judging with great common-sense that however great a disposition, it could only be fully developed by incessant study, made little Nicolo sit by his side while he was pondering the solution of a Lottery problem, and uninterruptedly practise the elements of violin-playing. What is that famous Lottery problem? Poor people in Austria and Italy at that time, in Austria even to this day, were offered by Government a chance of becoming suddenly rich, by means of the State Lottery, which ensured a great bonus to anybody who could guess, out of the five numbers that are drawn every Saturday night, one, two, three, or even more numbers. For instance, when a man brought the number 21 and put a shilling on it, and the number was one of the five drawn by the end of the week, he received thirty shillings.

If he fixed the order of its appearance, that is to say, if he intimated that it would appear the second or third, etc., and it did so appear as he predicted, then he got ninety shillings for the one shilling he had ventured. If two, or even three numbers were guessed, the amount to be won was much more important. That hundreds of thousands must lose their shillings ere one wins, they all know very well, but each of them fancies he will be *the* one.

Papa Paganini was governed by the same foolish mania which dominates some people in our days with regard to the gambling-table, who always discover *une martingale*, a never-failing method—yet one which by the merest accident always fails—to win at last, and even to break the bank by calculating all the probabilities. So while he sat speculating what numbers were bound to be drawn, Nicolo sat studying his own plans with regard to the strings and measurements of his little fiddle. Nobody would admit that by ordinary means a man could arrive at such unheard-of wonders of technique, and the immensity of his success is clearly proved

by the inventions to which public opinion had recourse, in order to discover how the impossible had been rendered possible. So they said he had a pact with Lucifer—that his violin was made out of the wood which served to make his father's coffin—that he murdered his wife, and was imprisoned, and that during the many years he was locked up his perpetual study gave him this great superiority over all his rivals, etc. But how is it, then, that he astonished his masters even when a child, and before he was old enough to have a wife to murder ?

The tale of his being imprisoned for murder grew so persistently, that he took official steps to prove where he had been day by day, and established the most positive alibi ; but as to his violin, he had a very ingenious means of proving that it was not endowed with special supernatural qualities by Lucifer, for when he played at Milan he passed his fiddle to another violinist, who of course could not do more with it than with his own, while Paganini took out of the hands of a member of the orchestra the violin he played on, and amazed the audience, but

especially the owner of the instrument, by the wonders he produced on it.

It may not be quite out of place to say here that all stringed instruments played with a bow were at first called viola; those that were held between the legs, viola da gamba (our violoncello); those that were held in the arms, viola da braccia. The smaller instrument then received the Italian diminutive name violino, whereas the name of viola remained for the bigger alto. It is said that the first violin was made by a Breton, Jean Kerlin, in 1449; and yet we find, barely one hundred years later, the men born who were to be known as the most famous violin-makers, and whose instruments to this day fetch enormous prices, viz., Andrea and Nicolo Amati. Jerome, son of Andrea, was the maker of one of the violins with which Paganini used to astonish his audiences. Another violin he used to play on, and which he left to his birthplace, Genoa, was a Joseph Guarnerius, presented to him by Mr. Livron, as will be seen hereafter. Nicolo Amati's famous pupil, Stradivarius, died in 1737, at the age of eighty-seven, still working

during that year ; and it is well known that no later maker ever reached the perfection of those two grand firms.

It is rather a strange coincidence that Tartini (1692-1770), who died before the days of Paganini, and whose life was filled with most interesting adventures, should have produced a most surprising concert piece, and have found it necessary (perhaps his friends thought it convenient to invent the story) to relate that at the age of twenty-one he had a dream, in which Lucifer appeared to him and played a piece so full of diabolical effects, that on awaking he tried to retain and note down all the passages. It is not impossible that this precedent of inspiration from the lower world gave rise to the belief in Paganini's almost supernatural powers of execution.

Those who heard Paganini play were fascinated by his execution, and amazed at the facility with which his prodigious dexterity overcame unheard-of difficulties. He never lacked the most admirable purity of intonation, and the audiences of every country where he appeared were most impressed by

the deep feeling, the passionate interpretation, the tears, and (I quote from an ear-witness) the diabolical laughter he could command whenever he chose to make his instrument speak. It is a strange coincidence that I should write these lines on the 18th of February, the very day when Paganini was born, before the sun's rays became visible, and whilst it was yet night, as becomes so mighty a star.

If the son moved hearts, the father moved portmanteaus and packing-cases; but though in the humble station of a porter, his passion for music, as is so often the case with Italians, was such, that he bought himself a mandoline, an instrument which could be acquired cheaply and learned easily, and which he taught first himself and then his little boy. This probably accounts for Paganini's later proficiency on the guitar, an instrument on which he is said to have produced as unprecedented effects as he did on the violin, only that the short, pinched sound of the guitar is incapable either of the sustained, or the swelling and ebbing effect of the violin, so that, cæteris paribus, the greatest virtuoso

on the guitar will never be able to produce anything like the effects of the violin.

Having given an extremely slight idea of the origin of the violin, I may perhaps be allowed to say what a number of learned heads may regard as great nonsense. I will therefore proceed with caution, so as to compromise myself as slowly as possible. The guitar and the harp, instruments which seem to take us back as far as Jewish music, used to be, until the second quarter of this century, very fashionable in London ; and surely it is difficult to imagine any instrument with which the grace of a handsome woman can be more poetically combined than the harp. I remember, some twenty-five years back, meeting, at the Duchess of Somerset's in Park Lane, a young lady who was a perfect picture, bent forward towards her harp, her pretty hands most gracefully causing the strings to vibrate. She not only looked a seraph, chanting the praise of the Lord, but in truth she played with wonderful skill and charm. It was my privilege then often to accompany her, and once we played a duet, when her mother came in and said, ' Really,

it is too lovely! and do you know what a solemn day this is? To-day Gladys is coming of age. Look at her: isn't she old?' And she was so pretty, and notwithstanding her twenty-one years, she blushed so deeply. Blushed and was twenty-one—to-day she is a grandmother!

The instrument, as I said, was so much the fashion during the earlier half of this century, that one of the great music publishers of London told me, when he took the business from his father the most valuable part of their stock was Hoxa's harp music. However, the inexorable tyrant Fashion has driven it out of the salon, and very nearly out of the concert-room, to be replaced by that other universal tyrant, the piano, which in its turn will probably have to give way to some other favourite of the capricious goddess. The guitar, which now occupies us, as being one of the preferred instruments of Paganini, is, in my humble idea, of the most ancient origin. We find in that oldest of all records, the Old Testament, Jubal, 'the father of all those who made music,' as the inventor of an instrument called Kinnor, or

Kinra. This instrument, called in Arabic Kisra and Kitra, I have seen engraved on two Jewish coins in the British Museum, and there it resembles an instrument in olden times in use with a South African tribe (the Berbers); Niebuhr, the famous German decipherer of hieroglyphs, describes it in his journey through Syria. However that may be, the Arabs having made that Kitra their portable musical companion, the Moors brought it to Spain, and there it was called Kittara, later on Guitarra. Compare with this the instrument which is to be played lying horizontally on the table, and which is called in German cittar or zither; or take the old harp, which is, so to say, a perpendicular guitar—for those harps had neither the power nor the tone of our Erard's double-action harps; and if you look at one of those ancient instruments, the Dalway harp, exhibited in South Kensington in 1872, inscribed 'Ego sum Regina Cithararum' (the same word), 1621—in fact, take the whole family of these pinched-string instruments together, and the supposition cannot be found extraordinary that the guitar really

comes from the Syrian Kinra (Syrian and Hebrew are not very different from each other), so that the guitar seems to be one of the most ancient instruments known. Of course, modern times have improved and perfected it, and its first-cousin, the modern harp, the instrument which Pencerd Gwalia (John Thomas, the harpist to the Queen) plays, is slightly different from the one on which King David composed the music to his immortal Psalms.

Paganini received his first tuition, then, as was the case with Mozart, from his father. But Mozart's father understood the violin thoroughly, whilst Paganini's father loved it, but understood it not. Nothing, however, is easier than to teach a genius. Madame Patti never had a singing-master but her brother Ettore. This is just what Greek mythology teaches us. Genius jumps all armed out of Jupiter's brains, not like common mortals without a rag, and having to work hard for, or to receive from charity, wherewith to cover their skin, but dressed, attired, armed, wanting no tuition, no help, ready for the fray of life. It was thus that

at six years of age Nicolo began playing on a fiddle, and at eight he wrote a sonata so difficult that nobody but he could play it—like little Mozart, the story of whose difficult concerto we have already told.

Nicolo Paganini, even in his childhood, always sought for some *tours de force*. Of course the father very soon saw that he could not continue to teach his son, who in no time had learned more than the father ever knew himself. So he took him to Gervasoni, who declared that no ordinary master could guide a pupil of such genius, but that he should go to Rolla, the great violin-player. To Rolla then they repaired; but the great man was ill in bed, and while the father went to speak to him, the son, seeing a violin with a large manuscript on the table, took up the fiddle and played at sight the concerto of which Rolla had left the manuscript in the room. Rolla, in bed, hearing the performance, asked who was the virtuoso in the other room who played a concerto bristling with difficulties as if he had studied it for a long time. When he was told that it was a boy eight years old, who was brought to him to take lessons, 'If that

is a boy,' said Rolla, 'who at that tender age plays as he does, don't come to me to teach him, because he has nothing more to learn; at any rate I can teach him nothing.'

I cannot refrain from telling here what one of the most talented *charlatans* of our time told me with a similar purport. Jullien, to whom this country thirty years ago owed much with regard to orchestral music, was certainly by all outward signs a charlatan. The grimaces which he made when conducting, the studied preparation of his appearance, his over-embroidered French cambric shirt-front, and, to put it mildly, the exaggeration of the stories he used to tell, misled a number of people into thinking he was nothing but a humbug. But it happens very often that in external habits and manner a man may be a humbug, yet seriously and profoundly able where his proper work is concerned. Frenchmen have a tendency towards these comedies, their greatest poet, Victor Hugo, not excepted. When a gentleman wished to make Hugo's acquaintance, and had for the purpose procured a letter of introduction sufficiently powerful for Victor

Hugo to grant the request and receive him, he always took the preliminary precaution of learning the station, the position, the political principles of the man who was to be introduced; and it is a fact that according to such information, Victor Hugo made his entry either in deep thought, with his right hand in his waistcoat-pocket pointing to the heart with a Napoleonic air, or he burst in, both hands outstretched towards the new-comer as if he had expected him for ten years; or else, with Orléanists *par excellence*, he came in with a *soi-disant* bourgeois air, while with republicans he acted the 'liberté, fraternité, égalité' business, represented by an uncommon *laisser aller*.

As to mystic Wagner, who was so long a miserably poor man, and who the moment he obtained control of a half-mad king's purse had his 'Ambrosia' mysteriously set before him, and drank his nectar only out of a solid gold cup—nobody doubts his genius, notwithstanding his charlatanism.

In his own way such was Jullien. The story he told me of his beginning the study of music is too good to be lost.

'When I was twelve years old,' Jullien said, 'I played the flute and the fiddle without ever having learnt either. I then thought I should like to become a great composer, and, *to try my hand*, I wrote a Grand Mass. Musicians who saw it advised my father to send me to the Conservatoire, and let me study under a great master. Accordingly I went to the rue Bergère, and asked for the day and hour when Monsieur Cherubini, the learned Directeur du Conservatoire, consented to receive pupils. "Jeudi à trois heures," cried the concierge. Accordingly at the appointed hour I went, taking my last work with me. When I entered the *cabinet* of the Director, I trembled as his eagle eye fixed upon my small countenance. "Que veux-tu?" he shouted. "Apprendre la musique," I said very humbly. "Qu'est-ce que tu as là?" he said, pointing to my music. "Oh, une bagatelle," I said, "une messe que j'ai faite." Again he looked at me as if he would pierce me. He took the manuscript, looked at it, then read it attentively. "C'est toi qui as fait cela?" he asked rather brusquely. "Yes," I said. "Que veux-tu apprendre?" he asked,

and then with a patronizing wave of his right hand, he said : "*Va-t'en, tu es la musique !*" ' One must have known Cherubini, his conceit with his undoubted deep science, the intolerance with which he would not allow that any other great composer existed, to understand the boldness of this story, that such a man would so speak to such a boy : 'What can you learn? Go, you are music itself!' Which, as I said before, did not prevent Jullien from being a man of remarkable talent, and having in Promenade Concerts just that effect upon the masses which serious simplicity might never have accomplished.

It was then deemed advisable to let young Nicolo come before the public and play after his own fashion. He gave his first concert when nine years old, and, what is more, he played variations of his own on 'La Carmagnole,' the great revolutionary air which had accompanied the victorious banners of the French Republic all over Europe. He soon found that his immoderate desire to do what no other artist could accomplish rendered it indispensable that he should study with an extraordinary perseverance. He therefore

worked ten to twelve hours a day uninterruptedly, until he could overcome what until then had been called insurmountable difficulties. At fifteen he was already the greatest violinist known, and he went to Paer, not to learn composition, which he had at his fingers'-end, so to say, by privileged birthright, but to learn orchestration. His father kept him so strictly that the one idea of young Nicolo was to throw off the paternal yoke and be free. The means to reach that end were not judiciously chosen. He made the acquaintance of a set of gamblers, who not only made him believe that with his cleverness he would win at every game, a trap into which so many young men too easily fall; but they let him win a little money from themselves, and then introduced him to a number of marquises and viscounts, who were no other but their own gang. Not only did he lose all his money—his watch, a valuable one which had been presented to him by a Cardinal—but he lost even his violin, and moreover signed away a sum which he had risked in order to recoup himself. People often ask how it is

that with equal chances a gambling bank always wins and the *pointeurs* lose. To this there are two answers. First, the chances are not equal, the bank keeping one or two combinations beyond the ordinary chances in its own favour ; and then the bank does not get excited as the gambler does, who only remains quiet when he wins, but gets anxious and unreasonably hot when he loses, the first and fatal consequence of which is that he always doubles in order to *rattraper* his lost money. Winning therefore simple stakes, and losing double and quadruple sums, the issue cannot be doubtful. Paganini, an over-excitable Italian nature, fifteen years old, in the hands of experienced professional gamblers, as I stated, of course was cleared out, and did not know how to make a *bajocco*, as he had lost his instrument. His father either had nothing and could not, or would not give him anything. There he was in despair, when a Deus ex machinâ appeared in the form of a Monsieur Livron, who lent him a violin made by Guarnerius, on which Nicolo first performed in public a series of very difficult studies, which he had composed

in 1797, when thirteen years old. It was a revelation, and he was covered with laurel crowns and applause. When he returned to Monsieur Livron, thanking him with tears in his eyes for the loan of the instrument with which he had freed himself from all embarrassments, at the same time giving back the violin which had been so generously lent to him, Monsieur Livron said: 'God forbid that I should take this instrument back, and profane the strings which your immortal fingers have touched! Pray do me the honour to keep it for ever, and may it always be the witness of similar triumphs.' Being thus doubly emancipated, and freed from the tyrannical ill-treatment of his father, Nicolo made a grand artistic journey through Italy, Pisa and Lucca witnessing the first victories of the greatest executant of his age. He then went to Venice, to give his first concert during the Santa Marta, and I need scarcely add, with enormous success.

Here let me pause a little, and give you a brief *aperçu* of this most poetical and most interesting of all public feasts. Of course you know Venice, and the Piazza di San

Marco, and the church with the Campanile, and the Palace of the Doges, with the lions into whose mouths anonymous denunciations were cast, none the less terrible and fatal for that ; and you have been shown the Piombi, where, under the roof, the prisoners were exposed to the fearful heat of the sun's rays, to be suddenly thrown down below into the ice-cold cellars, whence they were brought into the council-chamber, condemned, and prudently led over the Ponte dei Sospiri (Bridge of Sighs), and from thence, with one quick jerk, thrown down into the water ; or else they were led to kiss the Panna, a mechanical contrivance, which, the moment a prisoner was pushed into the room, got up to welcome the unhappy man with outstretched arms, these arms being two trenchant swords, which caught the neck on each side, cutting the unfortunate victim into two halves.

An obliging guide reminds you of all these awful tales of the Republic, as he takes you through the palace into that terrible council-chamber, where you see the Doges' portraits in long rows, interrupted only in one place by a black tablet, on which you

read the words, 'Hic est locus Marini Falieri, decapitati pro criminibus,' representing Marino Faliero, who had conspired to suppress the Republic, and make himself its king, but was betrayed and found out, and, at eighty years of age, decapitated, as the tablet states. All these horrors vanish as you come down again into the warm Italian sun, and enter San Marco, which, in remembrance of the marriage between the Republic and the ocean, has its floor entirely built in wave-form, so that you have to be very careful how you walk, not to stumble at every minute uphill or downhill.

Paganini naturally could not avoid pressing invitations to Paris; but he first accepted a permanent position at the Court of Lucca, where, it is said, he fell madly in love with one of the dames du palais, whose unbounded admiration of Paganini's genius made him believe that his passion was reciprocated. It is not exactly known whether this was so, but owing to his extremely nervous organization and weak constitution, exhausted after a certain time by a series of concerts, it was his habit to withdraw for a short time from

public performance, to gather new strength and energy. It was of such temporary retirements that his enemies, jealous of his unprecedented successes, took advantage to say, first, that he murdered his wife—which would have been difficult to prove, since he never had a wife—and then, that he risked prematurely a declaration of love to the aforementioned lady, and that she, complaining of his impertinence, obtained an order for his incarceration for three months. But her admiration for the artist was well known, and the only doubt is whether she did not adore the man as well, and since in no country there exists a law to imprison a man for his feelings, so long as he does not allow himself to be led away into actions incompatible with the manners of a gentleman, the story appears on the face of it untrue. And besides the improbability of the affair, Paganini, hearing of the accusation, proved the falsity of the story, and it collapsed at once.

Paganini received decorations from many sovereigns, as might be expected in the career of so extraordinary an artist. But his being appointed Capitaine de Gensdarmes,

and going to Court in his quasi-military uniform, with his extraordinary pale face and long black curls, naturally led people to banter him immoderately.

Celebrity has a strange attraction for ladies. About Paganini, however, so many strange tales have been told, that one never knows what to believe. He disappeared for three years, not from the world, but from the public platform. He reappeared with a quantity of duets for violin and guitar, and although a man of such skill on both instruments might, in the common course of composition, have written duets for his two chosen instruments, there is a generally accredited legend that he passed three years in the bonds of tenderness and secrecy with a lady who played the guitar to perfection, and that he wrote all these duets for her, or, to speak more accurately, for their mutual performance. An interesting revelation in Paganini's life belongs to this period. He had gambled again and lost everything, and he was offering to sell his violin, estimated at £200, to a rich amateur for £80. But just before concluding the bargain he discovered in his waistcoat-

pocket thirty francs, with which he thought he would yet once more try his luck. How many such 'last times' gamblers try, to be sure! He again lost, and at length staked his last half-crown, with which he won, played eleven times after each other *quitte ou double*, and eleven times he won. Then he took up £250 he had won, got up, and never touched a card any more.

In Ferrara his life was in danger. A singer, Marcolini, disappointed him at the last moment, and the whim seized him to ask a dancer whom he knew, a Signora Pallerini, to fill the time between his solos with a *pas seul*. She pleased the audience, but suddenly a whistle was heard from the gallery; Paganini was coming on, and announced that he would give an imitation of different birds, which he did with great cleverness, particularly the nightingale; when just as he was about to finish, he advanced to the footlights and said, 'Questo è per quelli che han fischiato' ('That's for the whistlers'), at the same time, with all possible clearness, following up a high note with a low one several times, and distinctly producing, 'hee-haw—hee-

haw!' The Ferrarese peasants, who filled the gallery, taking this as an insult to them, were down in a moment, over the orchestra, on to the stage, so that flight by the back door and immediate departure from Ferrara was the only means to save Paganini from the infuriated mob.

He happened to play before the Princess Pauline Borghese, sister of Napoleon I., when his *chanterelle* (the E string) snapped. Whether by accident or his own design, the A broke after this, and he played so wonderfully on the two remaining strings a duet between two lovers, that the Princess said to him: 'You do such incredible things, Monsieur Paganini, with two strings, that I am almost sorry that the D string didn't give way too, so as to leave you only one string. I should have liked to hear what it is possible even for a sorcerer like you to do on the G alone.' 'Qu'à cela ne tienne,' said Paganini, with the greatest equanimity, and he coolly took the D off, and began his famous variations on the Prayer of Mosè on the G alone. It is useless to try to give a description of the amazement, not to say stupefaction, of

his hearers at this unparalleled feat, or of the admiration which followed the first surprise, when they saw what a man's hand could do with one string. True, it was *that* man's hand.

This is only another instance of what is unfortunately a truism, continually illustrated in all the arts, that people prefer being amused or astonished to being touched or enchanted. Take up a paper or magazine, and point out a clever but serious article, and one decidedly not so clever but full of fun. How many readers will the latter secure in comparison with the former? Ten to one, I should say!

I pass over a series of concerts given in many towns with invariable success. In 1827 the Pope bestowed the order of the Golden Spur on Paganini, the same decoration having been conferred more than fifty years before on the child Mozart. The Austrian Ambassador in Rome was so deeply impressed with Paganini's playing, that he insisted on his going to Vienna, and giving that ultra-musical town a chance of hearing the greatest violinist of the century. Never shall I forget what everybody who had heard

him told me afterwards of the impression he then created. Men and women went mad about him. While he played, the greatest violin authorities known in Vienna—violinists of European fame like Mayseder, Boehm, etc., stood there perfectly annihilated, their heads drooping, the tears in their eyes, as if the revelation of Paganini's playing had shown them how small they were, and Boehm said to an old friend of mine, who often afterwards repeated it: 'I should consider myself wanting, not in modesty but in common decency, if ever I played in public again.' Startled by this expression, my friend went to a *café*, where in Vienna nearly all friends meet—the universal theme there of course being Paganini, when suddenly the door opened and an old gentleman, a government employé, well known to the habitués for his quiet habits, entered the café carrying a dusty violin-case, and remarking to his friend: 'You see it is thirty years since I played on my violin, but I am really happy to have found it again. I am going to have new strings put on it, and I will have a go at it afresh. When one hears such heavenly playing as

Paganini's, anything that can even in a remote degree remind you of it is welcome.' How different are the impressions made on the great artist and on the old amateur!

The mania of doing honour to Paganini by associating him with everything, went so far at Vienna that gloves, hats, rings, coats, pins, all were named after him. He used to have a fiacre whose driver did not know him, but who turned out to be an Italian; he asked Paganini whether he could give him a lucky number. 'What for?' asked Paganini, who remembered his father's unprofitable efforts. 'I have a countryman,' said the driver, 'who seems to set the town on fire with his fiddle: I have made up my mind to hear him, but having a family I can't save enough of my daily earnings to buy a ticket, so I will try the lottery.' 'If you promise,' said Paganini, 'never to gamble in the lottery, I will try and get you a ticket. Fetch me to-night at seven, and if I can I will give you an admission.' It is easy to guess that Paganini, after having been driven to the theatre where he played, told the driver to put up his horses and come

back to the concert. The driver did so. And so overcome was he when he saw that the great artist was himself his daily fare, and so over-excited did he get in his national pride and enthusiasm, that he waited Paganini's exit from the stage-door, fell on his knees before him, and covered his hands with tears. From the highest to the lowest, they all lost their heads over him.

Here is a postscript to this story. A few days after this great event in the driver's life, he came to Paganini and said he had a great favour to ask: No, no money; no present; yet a great favour—would Paganini allow him to paint his cab in the Italian colours, and to inscribe Paganini's name on it, and to say to every customer that it was in his cab that Paganini used to drive to his concerts? Paganini could not well refuse, and so enchanted was he with this simple soul's enthusiasm, that he who had seen princesses almost at his feet, offered to buy the horse for him, which did not belong to the driver. But this the driver frankly refused, too happy and proud to parade the glorious name of his countryman as a crest on his cab.

Paganini left Vienna for Paris, carrying everything before him there as everywhere; making a great fortune, which continually accumulated, because he spent very little, and this led to his reputation for avarice. The story I have told of his magnificent generosity to Berlioz is a powerful and absolute disproval of so unkind an aspersion.* I have travelled much, and seen much of artists rewarded by sovereigns and other rich people, but I am free to say that I have never heard of a similar case of generosity so nobly offered. And that man has been called a miser!

Three years later Paganini returned to Vienna. He found that the enthusiasm of the Vienna audience had not in the least cooled down; and when after his first piece, the famous Rondo in B minor, with the little bell accompaniment, he bowed himself out, an enormous bouquet fell at his feet from a box whence the most uproarious applause had greeted him all the time. Curious and grateful, he smilingly looked up: whom did he behold? His driver with his family. . . .

* See 'Berlioz,' vol. i., p. 93.

The Italians are known to be a thrifty, economical people. The luck which Paganini's name on the cab had brought the driver was such that he made a small fortune in three years. The desire of knowing everything about the great violinist caused people to ask the man, who paraded his name all through the town, for a number of details of Paganini's life. Probably he related a great deal more than he knew; but by sticking to what he had said, and always repeating it, he soon learned his own lesson, which passed into history, and I should not be at all surprised if at last he himself believed every word of it, and would have been seriously offended had anyone doubted the accuracy of his details.

Paganini, besides performing wonders on his two instruments, was an excellent musician, and in Italy, especially at Lucca, he had frequently to conduct the orchestra when the Court appeared. It was at the palace of Lucca that he played a sonata called 'Napoleon,' in honour of the beloved sister of the great Emperor, who was at that time Princess of Lucca. This sonata was

written for one string only, and the sensation which he created with it was such that a cantata by Cimarosa, which followed, produced no effect whatever. As I said before, amusing and exciting performances are generally more likely to please than works of serious but quiet merit. Paganini never changed the name of this sonata, while the noble symphony which Beethoven christened 'Napoleon,' in admiration of that great man, the child of the greatest revolution known, did not keep this name long, for, when Beethoven heard that Napoleon had made himself Emperor, he, the staunch Republican, scratched out the name of Napoleon, and changed the name of his work into: 'Sinfonia Eroica.'

Paganini excited the greatest admiration, and reaped a rich harvest in nearly every German town, so much so that in Berlin he said, 'J'ai retrouvé mon public de Vienne.' Here, too, they painted his portrait on gloves and inside hats, and stuck his miniature bust on sticks and cigar-cases; they even called a certain back-stroke 'coup de billard Paganini.' He returned to Italy very rich, and was asked to

play before the widow of the great Napoleon, Maria Louisa, Duchess of Parma. He fell ill, however, and had the good luck to meet with a landlord who imagined that Paganini had an infectious disease, and with great humanity transported him bed and all downstairs outside the door, and left him in the street, where, after a short time, Paganini's great friend, the violoncellist Ciandelli, found him. He did instantly what was wanted. First of all he brought down the landlord, and gave him such a thrashing that he had to be carried upstairs; he then took Paganini to his own villa, where he was carefully and tenderly nursed, and where he soon recovered his health.

Paganini, eccentric in so many things, had also an eccentric system of curing himself. There was in the beginning of this century a French physician who acquired some reputation because he published a book in which he certified that a certain remedy invented by him was sure to cure all diseases, even those supposed to be incurable. There is never a fool who does not meet with a bigger fool who thoroughly believes in him,

and this Leroy ruined a number of constitutions by the immoderate application of his remedy. Of course the name of an illustrious patient was instantly published, in the same way as a number of other patent medicines were advertised all over Europe. Thus it came to pass that Paganini, who, however indisposed he may have been, refused to see a doctor, took this draught by the pint, and of course weakened and injured himself very much. Whether his death, at the age of fifty-four (he died on May 27th, 1840), was caused by it or not, certain it is, that it did him considerable harm.

Paganini was intelligent and cunning, two qualities not always combined, seeing that even with men of great *esprit*, common-sense is an uncommon gift. Nevertheless he was too easily wrought on, and his family and his poor countrymen abroad took base advantage of his riches. He showed his cunning in an amusing way with his French rival, Lafont. The vanity of Frenchmen is proverbial, although not universal, for I have known a number of them not only most unselfish and sincere friends, but remarkably modest; for one instance,

take the great composer Halévy, who would never believe in his own merit. But when they are vain, they excel all others, like their king Louis XIV., who called himself the Sun (Le Roi Soleil).

Lafont was an excellent violinist, and came to Milan to give a concert. He heard that Paganini was in town, and straightway Lafont went to him and asked him to appear with himself at his concert, and play a double concerto. It would be 'so kind, and would show that he (Paganini) was not jealous.' No, he would not mind, Paganini said; and he was not jealous. Lafont, certain of his superiority, put out all his strength at the rehearsal so as to crush his rival. Paganini only played when it was necessary to indicate the time for the accompaniment. Lafont, who expected a great advertisement from the musical duel, of which he felt sure he would come out as the victor, filled the house to its utmost capacity. But what was his astonishment when in the evening Paganini played in double stops what Lafont had played in single notes, made a hundred notes in a cadenza where

Lafont had played twenty; and where Lafont performed only with accuracy and grace, Paganini '*transporta l'auditoire*,' according to a Frenchman's own account! so that next morning, Lafont, discovering that he had forgotten his best bow in Paris, precipitately strapped his portmanteau, and left for France!*

Paganini met in his travels a young singer full of talent, Signora Antonia Bianchi, whom he engaged to sing between his solos. They travelled five years together, got very much attached to each other, and an undeniable proof of their mutual consideration was forthcoming on July 23rd, 1825.

Those who heard Paganini in London in 1834, some six years before his death, say that the indescribable enthusiasm which his playing created was somewhat damped by the exaggerated prices of admission. But that was not Paganini's fault; his tickets were bought up by speculators, who resold at the

* Lafont's playing was of irreproachable purity, but quite devoid of spontaneity. A short time after the event related above, he met with an accident, being thrown from a diligence which was upset, and he was killed on the spot.

highest prices they could screw out of the buyers. I know that one of the greatest violinists I have heard told me that Paganini's studies were at the time thought so unusual and so difficult, that they were considered an enigma which very few undertook to solve, and it would be interesting to know how many would now be able to solve it in a satisfactory manner. He played on two, even on three strings at a time, without doing what Ole Bull did, cut the bridge straight; he played arpeggi in double stops, or made a series of staccati marking the melody in pizzicato. He passed, as I have before said, for having achieved some supernatural *tours de force* by a supernatural pact, and the superstition of some people who credited this nonsense went so far, that a lady who heard him in Italy, and would not believe that any human being could so far surpass all his fellow-creatures without extraordinary means, followed him to the stage-door, where stood his cab with a black horse; she vowed he never touched the ground, that he entered a fiery chariot with two black horses, and went away through the air. So in

Italy they declared of little Mozart that it was his enchanted ring which accomplished all his feats on the piano, until he took off the ring, quietly put it on the desk, and continued playing as before. In an unpublished letter of Vieuxtemps, this great violinist states that, at the age of fourteen, he heard Paganini here in London, and he seems quite unable to give an idea of his admiration and delight at Paganini's performance of 'Le Streghe' ('The Witches'). In one paragraph he says: 'His bow was fabulous in rapidity; his certainty stupefying, never even a doubtful note; he was infallible.' Vieuxtemps, one of the most remarkable composers for the violin during the second quarter of our century, and himself one of the greatest celebrities, says in that letter: 'How can I venture to give an opinion of him—*moi, pygmée ?*'

Paganini, in the boldness of his new ideas and in their execution, in his harmonies in thirds and sixths, was amazing. When he played the prayer from Mosè on the G string alone, he took the baritone voice as written, then the soprano voice an octave higher, and led into the major part with such triumphant

power, that Rossini, who had composed it, said it was doubtful whether Paganini did not effect as much on the one violin string as all the singers in the theatre put together. I believe it is generally known that Rossini created with that Prayer in G minor a greater sensation than with any single piece of all his operas; and I imagine that it was the majestic simplicity of that sacred piece on the operatic boards which caused the unusual effect. It is not easy to see the reason (but many things happen of which we cannot see the reason), yet it is a fact that, notwithstanding the unprecedented sensation which Paganini created for forty years, he was nervous every time he had to appear before an audience. Yet he knew well to what an extent he could depend on the enthusiasm of the public, for once, in a small town in Italy, a friend said to him: 'If you wish to have a full room, don't double your prices.' 'No,' he said, 'je les triple,' and he did; and an over-crowded room was the consequence. One of his most disastrous triumphs, if I may so call it, he achieved when playing at Lord Holland's. Some one asked

him to improvise on the violin the story of a son who kills his father, runs away, becomes a highwayman, falls in love with a girl who will not listen to him, leads her to a wild country spot, and suddenly jumps with her from a rock into an abyss where they disappear for ever. He listened quietly, and, when the story was at an end, he asked that all the lights should be extinguished. He then began playing, and so terrible was the musical interpretation of the idea which had been given to him, that several of the ladies fainted, and the salon, when relighted, looked 'like a battle-field!'

It has been said of him that he was the sole interpreter of an art that was born and died with him. To hear him do what seemed impossible, harmonic shakes on two strings at the same time, and similar unheard-of difficulties, and to see the effect he produced on the audience, whose eyes hung on his bow, while he held their intense attention spellbound, and literally played on their hearts and commanded their tears, it is difficult to doubt the above opinion. Without servility, he had respect for every class of his public,

his motto being: 'I grandi non temo E li umili non sdegno' ('I fear not the great ones, nor do I disdain the humble ones'). He was a great man, in the broad sense of the word, and all that jealousy, small gossip, and petty envy could invent cannot make the man smaller. He maintained his family, whose demands were indiscreet to a degree, in brilliant fashion; he gave innumerable concerts for the poor, and on many occasions showed a large and liberal mind. About the persecution of ecclesiastical authorities he troubled himself very little. Until the entry of Victor Emmanuel into Rome, the Pope maintained the Holy Inquisition, which, if it did not burn the people in the public square as it did in Philip II.'s time, under his kind-hearted minister, the Duke of Alba, meddled with everything that any wealthy Catholic did, and took the basest advantage of the confessions of servants to pry into the private life of their masters. Because Paganini did not give big sums to churches or priests, they, the priests, caused one of the greatest scandals known in modern times at his death. He was at Nice, suffering from

phthisis laryngis, and the doctor gave him no hope. I do not know whether he was asked to see a priest and refused, or whether he was not asked, in order not to draw his attention to his death being so imminent. Suffice it he got worse. During the evening he would have no light in the room, but suddenly he asked that his curtains might be opened, and looked at the moonshine with a happy expression; then he demanded the constant companion of his life and his travels, his violin. With a feeble yet determined hand he got hold of it, and beckoned for his bow to be given to him. He began to draw a long note on his favourite sympathetic G string, and, playing, he passed away quietly, without suffering, dreaming of celestial harmonies which he had himself evoked so many times in the breasts of his hearers.

When he was dead, you would have thought the simplest thing would be to bury him. Not so. The Bishop of Nice forbade it, and sent a report to Rome, where a commission of inquiry into the catholicity of Paganini was instituted, which inquiry resulted in a refusal to have him buried in

consecrated ground. Monstrous as it may appear, *five years* passed after this dispute, before his son—who was made a baron in Germany — through connections, and the sacrifice of great sums of money, obtained permission to have a service read for him at Parma, in the Chiesa Steccata, built for the knights of St. George, after which he transported the coffin which contained his father's body into the country, to his Villa Gajona, and there buried him in May, 1845—when he had died on May 27th, 1840! And that in the nineteenth century!

During Paganini's lifetime, in Paris, he had a *passe d'armes* with the famous *bourgeois de Paris* (Dr. Véron), from 1830-1840 directeur de l'Opéra, rue Lepelletier, and who had the good fortune to produce Meyerbeer's 'Robert le Diable,' which proved to be the most attractive work for the treasurer that was ever brought out in Paris. Monsieur le Docteur Véron was the very type of Sardou's *faux bonshommes*. Always placid and smiling, pretending to be the embodiment of the *bourgeois de Paris*, there was not under the sun a more selfish man, or a man who more

studied his own pleasure and enjoyment. Being director of the Opera, and knowing the immense 'draw' Paganini would be, he made up his mind to invite him to play at the Opera some evening. For the doctor was a great patron of art and of artists whenever he could get something out of the patronage. He sent his secretary to Monsieur Paganini, to express the happiness it would be to Monsieur Pierre Véron to introduce Paganini to the *haute volée* of Paris, 'terms no object,' shrewdly calculating that by this pretended liberality he would get him cheaper.

Paganini at the appointed hour called on the director, and was horrified to find that instead of 'terms no object,' they were the principal object, and that he was offered the sixth of the net receipts ; so that if, say, 8,000 francs were received, and 4,500 deducted for costs, the remaining 3,500 would be divided into five-sixths for the director, and one-sixth —*i.e.*, less than 600 francs, or £23—for himself. 'Is not that magnificent?' asked Véron. 'It is magnificently shabby,' said the outraged Italian. 'Will you name your own terms?' asked flexible Véron. 'The half of the gross

receipts,' said Paganini. 'What!' said Véron; 'I am to pay all the expenses, and you to take half of the receipts without being liable for expenses? Do you think I'm a fool?' 'I did not send for you,' said Paganini; 'you sent for me.' 'True,' said Véron, 'and I will make a proposal. You pay everything, and then we share alike.' 'What!' shouted Paganini, having fortunately succeeded by this time in working himself up to a pitch of rage. 'What, you scoundrel! I pay the expenses——' He could say no more; he got deadly pale, and blood oozed out of his mouth profusely. Véron, afraid it might be an apoplectic stroke, for which he would be held accountable, rushed towards the great virtuoso, when the reason of his sudden attack became patent. Paganini wore false teeth attached to his real teeth by a spring, which, through his gnashing his teeth so furiously, broke, and the metal, cutting his gums, caused blood to flow freely. A little timely assistance and cold water cooled considerably his business ardour, and sent him home a calmer and wiser man. But, when afterwards requested to play at the Opera, he

consented only on condition of having no personal dealings with Pierre Véron, whose name he persisted in embellishing with the most flattering epithets.

One more trait of Paganini's character, which will show how very open to warm and tender feelings his heart was, and which will serve as a rebuke to all those who call him a heartless, selfish miser. 'He who loves children can't be a bad man!' I have mentioned that he had a little son, whose pompous names were Alexander Cyrus Achilles. But at home he called him Achillino. A friend once called to take Paganini to the theatre, where he was to play in the evening in a concert arranged between the acts. This is the description that friend gives of how he found him: 'I went to Paganini's lodgings, and I cannot easily describe the disorder of the whole apartment. On the table was one violin, on the sofa another. Of the diamond snuff-boxes which Sovereigns had given him one was on the bed, and one was among his child's toys on the floor; music, money, caps, watches, letters, and boots pêle-mêle here and there; the chairs, table, and even bed re-

moved from their places—a perfect chaos, and Paganini in the midst of it. A black silk cap covered his still deeper black hair, a yellow tie was loose round his neck, and a jacket of a chocolate colour hung on him as on a peg. He had Achillino in his lap, who was very ill-tempered because he had to have his hands washed. Suddenly he broke loose from his father, who said to me, "I am quite in despair; I don't know what to do with him. The poor child wants amusement, and I am nearly exhausted playing with him." Barely were the words out of his mouth, when Achillino, armed with his little wooden sword, provoked his father to deadly combat. Up got Paganini, catching hold of an umbrella to defend himself. It was too funny to see the long, thin figure of Paganini in slippers retreating from his son, whose head barely reached up to his father's knees. He made quite a furious onslaught on his father, who, retreating, shouted, "Enough, enough! I am wounded!" but the little rascal would not be satisfied ere he saw his adversary fall down vanquished on the bed. But the time passed, and we had to be off, and now

the real comedy began. Paganini wanted his white necktie, his polished boots, his dress coat. Nothing could be found. All was hidden away. And by whom? By his son Achillino. The little one giggled the whole time, seeing his father with long strides travelling from one end of the room to the other seeking his clothes. "What have you done with all my things?" he asked. "Where have you hidden them?" The boy pretended to be very much astonished and perfectly dumb. He shrugged his shoulders, inclined his head sideways, and indicated by gestures that he knew nothing whatever of the mishap. After a long search the boots were discovered under the pillow-case, the necktie lying quietly in one of the boots, the coat hidden in the portmanteau—and in the drawer of the dinner-table, covered with napkins, was the waistcoat. Every time Paganini found one of the missing objects, he put it on in triumph, perpetually accompanied by the little man, who was delighted to see his father looking for the things where the child knew they could not be found; but Paganini's patience

with him was unwearied.' A man who showed such deep respect for his mother, and such sincere love for his child, could not but be an extremely kind-hearted man. It is an undeniable fact that greatness of every kind has to be paid for—genius, success, wealth and glory cannot be showered upon one man without that curse of humanity, mediocrity, being roused to the highest pitch of envy and jealousy. No man of genius, talent, or intelligence can raise himself without the envious, the unskilful and unsuccessful catching hold of the statue and endeavouring to drag it down to their own level. That is what they have always essayed; they have always calumniated and crucified what was too sublime for their understanding, and dragged in the mud what they could not reach in its flight towards heaven. And in the same way a lot of small creatures tried with stories and inventions, and by malicious interpretations, to throw their own darkness on the light and lustre of one of the greatest illustrations of contemporary art — Nicolo Paganini.

SINGERS.

ADELINA PATTI.

MANY a great name has come under my pen, and I shall be quite happy if my sincere effort to be just has been appreciated by the reader, even where I have not been able fully to concur in the opinion of other and able biographers. But, whether it is because the great men who are dead can be more calmly judged, or because there is never half so much noise made about a poet or composer, whatever his talent, as about a great actress, especially when that great actress has a divine voice and is a great prima donna—whatever the reason may be, I approach with awe the task of giving an idea of the unconditional submission to her whims, the blind obedience to her dictates on the part of her manager,

of her public, of her colleagues, of anybody who comes into contact with Adelina Patti!

Adelina Patti, this spoilt child of the century, who sees at her feet whomsoever she chooses, called diva and adored as such, who is paid in gold weight for every note she utters, accustomed to receive five hundred pounds a night in England, and double that amount in America—Adelina Patti, that realized fairy dream of Scheherezade's thousand and one nights, the adored of everybody, the idol of all parts of Europe and America—Adelina Patti is an enigma, a question unsolvable even by the sphinx, who will not or cannot answer it. The enigma begins at her birth. So far as I have been able to ascertain in Spain, where she was born of Italian parents, the year that gave her daylight was 1842. But if you consult any dictionary of biography, or herself, the best informed authority, you will find invariably 1843 as the year properly authenticated.

You will, therefore, acknowledge it to be reasonable that I should henceforth swear that Adelina Patti the immortal, whose name

cannot die, but who has undoubtedly been born, saw the Spanish sun first in 1843. I remember Madame Lucca once insisting on my seeing her baptismal certificate, because, said she, she had had it copied from the church register on purpose to show how many years she is younger than certain other singers. Madame Patti being engaged at the same theatre with so much more salary, the least Madame Lucca could do was to prove that she was younger than Madame Patti. On mentioning the matter generally (catch me mentioning details) to Madame Patti, the reply vouchsafed me ran thus: 'You see, that poor Paulina (Madame Lucca), I don't know what is the reason of it, but everybody is making her out older than she is. Only yesterday people here talked such stuff about her. I am sure, and I told them so, that she is not more than forty-seven or at the utmost forty-eight years old; but they *would* have it that she has passed *la cinquantaine* (fifty).' A generous defence, but just fancy Madame Lucca hearing of it, when she showed me the official statement that she was born in 1846, and was consequently barely

forty! There I am in a fix, as our American friends say; am I to doubt an official paper? am I to doubt a sincere friend's word? I give it up. Let Madame Lucca be younger or older than Madame Patti, it concerns us not.

Now of course you have heard of Jumbo? And of Ben Butler, although you may not exactly see the connection between the two? So have you heard and read enough about Polly and Charlie. But what you do not know is, that these four names are given by Madame Patti to four parrots, the last of whom is her pet. What Madame Patti was, what she is, what she ever will be, is an *enfant prodige*. She was a wonder-child, as I shall presently show, and she appeared so when at the age of eighteen she came before an amazed London public, with not one hand held out to receive her; yet after her first air in 'La Sonnambula' the whole audience was taken by storm, and after her final air ('Ah non giunge') her success was so immediate, so undoubted, so palpably permanent, that Mr. Gye at once gave her £200 for the promise to sing nowhere else,

either in concert or *soirée*, but at Covent Garden.

I was present on that memorable night when her brilliant career was begun in London and completed in one evening, culminating in the magnificent sum of £150 per month—that is, for ten performances—being secured to her for three years; £150 per month, that was £400 for the whole season of twenty-five to thirty performances—not so much as she now receives for one evening. I said that she then appeared a wonder-child, and such she is still. The number of small steps which she trippingly makes across the stage, all her graceful and pretty *minauderies*, in fact the whole charm of her nature, the eternal youth of her appearance, are something childlike. Such she was, such she is, and unless she carries out her announced intention of leaving the stage—a thing very unlikely to occur with any singer in the full *vogue* of Madame Patti—such she will be to the last day of her performances.

Adelina Patti was born in Spain, of Italian parents. Her mother, a distinguished

prima donna in her time, of whom I am sorry to say I know nothing, told me once, alluding to her great career, 'Son' io la Barili,' probably expecting me to be struck dumb with awe and amazement at the mention of that great name. But, as I said before, I am sorry to say I never had heard the name before, so that when she said, 'I am La Barili,' I pretended to be very much impressed; but in reality she might have said, 'I am Ching-Chang-Hu,' for all that I knew of La Barili—it would have been the same to me. Anyway, song was the cradle of little Adelina. She was barely three to four years old when her mother heard her running up and down stairs humming, whistling, singing the airs that her mother sang, and continually exerting her voice and her memory musically. Her voice was naturally so flexible, and execution came to her so easily, that when eight years old she began making shakes of half and whole tones all through a scale up and down. About that time her father was not too prosperous, and to whom should they look for support but to little Adelina? It became imperative for her

to study and develop and establish in some solid manner the gifts nature had conferred upon her. So she took lessons, and I am glad here to state the true fact, from Ettore Barili, her brother—that is to say, the son of the same mother, but by a previous husband. It has been so often stated that Maurice Strakosch was her master, because it was he who brought her out, that the fact has somehow become historical; but it is not so. The fact is that Patti's real master, as she used to say, is 'le bon Dieu;' from Him she received her voice and the faculty of using it; and what is more curious than anything else in her career, she really never went through those patient studies and persevering work that made Jenny Lind the singer she at last became. For I need not tell the reader, that Madame Jenny Lind, ere she came to London, went to one of the greatest singing masters in Paris, and sang to him, and asked him what she should do to secure an honourable career. Whereupon the following conversation ensued: 'What is your nationality?' 'I am a Swede.' 'Have you any acquaintances in your own country, friends or so?' 'I

know only our old clergyman, upon whose patronage I could depend.' 'Is he married? has he any children?' 'He has a son of about twenty-five, and a daughter eighteen years old.' 'Well, my dear girl, all I can advise you to do is, to go home to your country and marry, if you can, that son of your clergyman, for *a singer you will never be!*' A few years after that, having studied with Manuel Garcia, she became the star everyone knows, and made her *début* as Alice in 'Robert le Diable,' the House of Commons interrupting a sitting to hear her! She never forgave the man who so conscientiously foretold her future in Paris, never even forgave Paris for granting hospitality to such a man, who, as she said, meant to steal all her glorious career from her, and nothing could induce her, not even an offer of unconditional contract, to sing in that hated city.

Strange to say, 'Norma,' in which Jenny Lind made her *début* before the Queen, the first step, as everybody knows, to an unlimited celebrity, was the first opera, too, in which Adelina Patti sang — a Norma

repudiating her faithless lover, a Norma crushing him in her jealousy with the sight of her children—and she eight years old! Adelina's other great *rôle* in her tender age was Rosina in 'Il Barbiere di Siviglia.' How she knew the whole part, both words and music, by heart, without learning it; how she sang fioritures as it seemed improvised on the spot, nobody ever could say, and it therefore is only to be explained, as she said herself, by her master being 'le bon Dieu!' So she went on singing until she was twelve and a half years old, making money wherever she went, and naturally creating a sensation, which made her the town's talk from city to city. Then her career was interrupted, and she remained for two years without singing.

I remember asking Alboni, who for several years previously had been travelling all over America, whether she had heard Adelina there, and she said, 'Heard her? Why, that was easier than to see her. She was put on a table when eleven years old, and she walked up and down as if it was a stage, and sang and acted like a grown-up

person, with the sort of inspiration that moved an Italian improvisatore.'

The Italian improvisatore, by-the-bye, seems a being of the past. I never hear of one now; and when I travelled in Italy, where in former times you every now and then met a group surrounding an improvisatore in the street—as in the London streets you occasionally meet a Sunday preacher—there has been nothing of the kind within recent years. The last improvisatore I remember, not one of street celebrity, but known in higher society, was Bindocci, whom I was asked to accompany at a party given by the Sardinian ambassador (Italy was then a mosaic of small states); and although I had never seen him or heard his way of improvising verses, I had to follow him from a page of written music which I had to read at sight. It was easy enough to play, but I had to find out how he expected me to support him, now loudly, now softly, either in a rapid or a sostenuto movement, according to the inspiration that governed him, or, as the Quakers would say, as the spirit moved him. He began stuttering, searching for his words,

adding phrase to phrase, now in rhyme, now in prose; by-and-by he got warmer, then suddenly it was as if an electric spark had lighted his brain, and down came the heavenly fire, and verse after verse, and rhyme after rhyme, in that wonderful Italian language that he spoke so clearly, warmly, incisively I might say; and the gaze of every lady in the room, her heart, as it were, hung on his lips, and the whole audience listened spellbound; you might have heard them breathing anxiously, excitedly, until the flame of his momentarily overstrained nerves flickered lower, and panting and struggling for breath he gradually went down as he had risen on the wings of his fantasia; the rhymes again failing, he visibly cooled, and, as if exhausted and tired from his effort, he spoke slower and lower, until the mechanism stopped that had just now worked so brilliantly, his head inclined, he got hold with his left hand of the back of my chair, and—all was over.

Then, with all the excitable *furia* of an Italian audience, broke loose the 'Bravo! Evviva!' and so on, and they surrounded

him, ladies and gentlemen, the former especially; but he stared at them indifferently, unmoved by their enthusiasm or their compliments, his lustrous black eyes measuring everybody round as if he did not know what he was about, and as if he had awakened from a delirium during which he might have said and done anything, or acted any imaginary scene, of which in his now sober, quiet state he seemed quite unconscious.

After full two years without any public performance, Patti having from a mere child become a young lady artist—although even now she was but fourteen and a half years old—was engaged to sing, no longer on a table, but on a regular stage. Maurice Strakosch had married her sister Amelia, to the great disgust of her mother, who hated Jews, saying that they could never enter Paradise. She never forgave her daughter for emancipating herself from her mother's control. And why did she hate the Jews? That she would have been at a great loss clearly to define. She hated Jews because they were Jews, of course, just as that French girl I have before quoted said: 'I hate asparagus,

and I am so glad I hate it, because if I didn't hate it, I should probably eat it, and I can't bear it!' In Vienna I once saw a piece in which a Jew was persecuted by a whole village, and when he said: 'Very well, I will leave your village and never return; but I have one question to ask you: what is it you hate Jews for?—have they done you any harm?' 'Oh,' said the children, 'you have crucified the Saviour; is not this enough to make us hate you all for ever?' 'Oh yes,' he said, 'that was a great sin committed, and, as I said, I will go; but you must first pay me a debt which I have come for, because—see these papers—the grandfather of your mayor borrowed from my father's grandfather the sum of 800 scudi, and that must be paid now.' 'How long ago is that?' 'Forty-two years.' 'Well, how can you expect such a payment, when six years bar a debt according to the law of the country?' 'Six years?' the Jew asked, 'and you will not be responsible for the money you received, yet you hold me responsible for a debt contracted two thousand years ago by my grandfather's grandfather's ancestors!'

Oh, perhaps some readers will say, this is a wrong argument, for it is not for what has been done two thousand years ago, but that their uses and rites to this day will not amalgamate with ours; they know not what Christian feelings are. Those who say so simply do not follow the commands of their own religion, for just as the Christian principle is brotherly love, so it was in the olden times with the Jews; it is said of Solomon, the wise king of Judæa, that a heathen came to him and said, 'If thou canst teach me the foundation of thy religion whilst I can stand on one foot, I will embrace thy faith and believe in thy God.' Said Solomon: 'Love thy neighbour like thyself!'

But Madame Barili-Patti was not a philosopher, and she quarrelled with her daughter for having entrusted her fate to an infidel. But the infidel had the vein of mercantile speculation in him, and he saw at a glance the money that could be made with the precocious talent and charm of that wonderful child, Adelina, wherein he totally differed from his then associate and partner, Ulman, another infidel, and the only impresario

America then had, with Strakosch, to whom later was added Maretzek, the conductor of Italian opera. Ulman saw and heard Adelina, and he expressed his belief that it was nothing but a straw fire that could not last for any length of time. He refused to have her even for one New York season. Perhaps he has since changed his mind.

Strakosch, however, saw matters in a different light. He travelled with her through the States down to New Orleans, gave concerts with varying financial results, but in most cases successful, artistically speaking, until, after three years had elapsed, he thought the moment had arrived for *le grand coup*—to take her to Europe.

And so he did. All her great deeds were unknown in Europe. That she had travelled with Gottschalk, the famous pianist and composer, whose acquaintance she made in New Orleans; that in that very town, child though she was, she sang the Traviata, and the theatrical people looked down upon the little creature—she is not very tall now, imagine what she was then, about thirty years ago—and refused to put themselves

out of their way to rehearse with her, and she actually sang the opera without a single rehearsal. Of all that nobody knew anything when she made her *début* at Covent Garden.

She arrived in London with her brother-in-law, Maurice Strakosch, who, as I before mentioned, had married her sister Amelia secretly. What I did not mention, however, is, that the mother became so enraged on account of that marriage, when it came to her knowledge, that, as the sisters were sitting together and sewing, the mother got hold of a pair of big scissors, and with that sweet calm which distinguishes Italians as a rule, threw them at Amelia; but in reality hit Adelina so unfortunately that the sanguinary consequences of her deed temporarily calmed her a little.

The great prima donna, however—who now boasts a country seat and a castle in Wales, literally stuffed with the most curious and valuable works of art—took two rooms in Norfolk Street, Strand, partly because it was near the opera-houses, but above all because it was cheap. Her first offer was made to the

then manager of Her Majesty's Theatre, Mr. Smith, the successor of Lumley, who had had his great days with Jenny Lind; his big company, Mario and Grisi, with the conductor Costa, having left him to establish themselves at Covent Garden. So Mr. Smith was supposed to be the very man to bring out Mademoiselle Patti, and to make her fortune and recoup his own.

But oh, misfortune! when Mademoiselle Patti and her relation-impresario arrived, Mr. Smith's career as manager was at an end, and there was nothing to be done but to see Mr. Gye (I speak, of course, not of the present one, but of his father), who was the only man to be appealed to. Now Mr. Gye—who had by the merest accident been chosen by the revolutionary committee of the singers, who had thrown overboard Mr. Lumley, to establish themselves in opposition to him, because they wanted somebody to take care of the mechanical part of the business for them—Mr. Gye was, if I may say so, a self-educated man, a long-sighted, energetic, intelligent man, but obstinate as a mule, having only one creed, the same that

Prince Windischgrätz, the Austrian Field-Marshal, is credited with—'Humanity begins only with the barons.' Nobility was all Mr. Gye cared for; no benefactor of humanity was in his eyes anybody when compared to a peer. With this view, he had got the utmost possible aristocratic patronage for his opera-house; he had succeeded in making it what in reality afterwards kept it alive—the fashion; and he was *the* man to make the fortune of a young singer like Adelina Patti, because one thing was certain—she could be heard before the best society only in his theatre.

I remember perfectly well the day when she was announced for her *début* at Covent Garden. I could not persuade a gentleman friend of mine, a banker, and who was a member of the same club to which I belonged, to come with me and hear her, although I told him she was expected to make a great hit. But she had no name, and it is all very fine to quote Shakespeare and ask, What is in a name? As a designation, certainly a rose would smell as sweet if it was called blotting-paper; but if you should

have to decorate a house for the reception of a dear friend, and the florist should propose any plants unknown to you, would you not order roses, oleanders, anything the name of which is advantageously familiar? Let anybody go on the stage and sing as well as Patti, would the applause be the same? above all, would the sale of the tickets be the same? On the other hand, let an unknown singer come out, and announce her under the name of Patti, and see the effect. Of course, on account of the name.

Well, then, Patti was announced, and she sang for—nothing. It was agreed that, if she pleased, she should sing twice a week at the rate of £150 *a month*, that is, a little less than £17 a night; now that is about as much as she would give to some waiter. The opera was 'La Sonnambula,' and the house was not full, of course. Forth she came, not one hand greeting her. Never shall I forget the unconcerned, simple way in which she walked forward, just like a child reciting a lesson, pretty and graceful, but in no way foreshadowing the great treat we were to enjoy. But after she had sung her first air,

there was not so much admiration as stupefaction in the house. Who was that little girl? How was such a voice, such a treasure, locked in such a tender chest? What *is* really in her? Let us wait for the second act. What will she do with 'Ah non giunge'?—and so on. I remember meeting Lord W—— in the lobby after the first act, as brilliant an amateur as it ever was my luck to meet with, and he said, 'Do you know, I am ashamed to say so, but that little girl gives me more pleasure than the whole crowd of those old singers put together. What do you think of her?' I said, 'My lord, all I have to say is, that I advise you at once to secure your box for the remainder of the season, for I guarantee that you will pay dearly enough for it if you do not.'

Act II. Encouraged by the evident effect she had created, Mr. Gye came upon the stage, glowing with the congratulations he had received, and he immediately concluded that engagement which resulted from a successful *début;* whilst Patti, feeling her wings grow and her hold on the public increase as she went on, launched herself heart and soul

into the brilliant finale, the effect of which was indescribable. The audience felt itself in the presence of a grand rising star.

Her success in London was as sudden a revelation as it was in New York. Here is what the *New York Herald* said on November 28th, 1859 :

'THE FIRST PATTI MATINÉE.

'One of the most remarkable events in the operatic history of the Metropolis, or even of the world, has taken place during the last week at the Academy of Music. We refer to the *début* of Miss Adelina Patti, whose career bids fair to rival those of the most brilliant Queens of Song. Her *début* on Thursday has already been described. The success which attended that performance was endorsed on Saturday by the largest audience that has assembled at an Opera Matinée since the Piccolomini crushes. Miss Patti sang the mad scene from "Lucia" in such a superb way as to stir up the audience, which is usually chary of applause, to the heartiest demonstrations of delight. The prima donna was twice called before the curtain, and the stage was literally covered with the flowers which were thrown before her. The success of this artist, educated and reared among us, with all the vocal gifts of an Italian, and all the cleverness of a Yankee girl, has made everybody talk of her, wondering who and what she is, where she has been, and so on. . . . She was brought out at the Academy to save the season. The manager had a good opera, plenty of fine artists, everything required for

fine performances; but the great outside public, always thirsting for something new, wanted a sensation. They have it in "Little Patti," who not only pleases the connoisseurs, and is the special favourite of the fair, but who has all the material for a great popular pet.'

When on the 26th November, 1884, Patti reappeared at the Academy of Music, where she had made her *début* a quarter of a century ago (November 24, 1859), it was suggested that a great reception should be tendered to her, which she at first only reluctantly accepted, on account, I see, in an American contemporary, 'of the attendant exposure to the eyes of the public.' I never knew Madame Patti so bashful as to shun the eyes of the public. She allowed herself, however, to be persuaded, and under the guidance of her impresario, who for reasons best known to the Americans is there always spoken of as 'the gallant Colonel,' the following procession was formed, fetching Madame Patti after the performance at the theatre, and accompanying her from there to the Windsor Hotel, where she lived:

'Torchbearers, four mounted police, the full Seventh Regiment band and drum corps. Colonel Mapleson

and staff on horseback ;* two mounted police ; the friends of Madame Patti ; Madame Patti in a carriage decorated with roses, and drawn by six cream-white horses ; platoons of police ; a waggon containing rockets, Bengal lights, etc.; twelve small pieces of cannon ; and, finally, torch-bearers.

'The route went along Fourteenth Street to Broadway, up Broadway to Fifth Avenue, and thence to Madison Avenue and the Windsor. Here the fireworks were lighted and the cannon fired, and then the band played "Traviata" pot pourri ; waltz, "Fior di Primavera," composed by Madame Patti ten years ago ; the sextet from "Lucia," and "America." Before her friends in the hotel parlours, Madame Patti sang one or two songs.'

Among the most curious items in this whole affair, are the twelve small pieces of cannon. Why these ? why were they fired ? The battles which Madame Patti won have, so far as I know, nothing to do with gun-powder, and although she has often been called the Queen of Song, I do not fancy that her army is provided with other ammunition than bouquets and pretty sayings.

* It seems that instead of being on horseback, the 'gallant Colonel,' finding that the horse he was to mount reared and kicked, preferred, to the valour to be displayed on horseback, the discretion of a 'yellow-coloured' cab, in which he followed his prima donna.

In England, although not quite so sudden as in New York, Patti's success was yet rapid. The Duchess of S——, who happened to be in her box during the first performance of Mademoiselle Patti, had barely heard that 'Ah non giunge' and the immense effect it produced on the audience, than she asked me to go on the stage and engage Mademoiselle Patti at once for the Duchess's next *soirée*. I did, but although I went immediately I came too late, for, as I before stated, Mr. Gye, seeing the extraordinary sensation which Mademoiselle Patti created, offered her there and then, over and above her regular salary, a sum of £200 as a compensation for singing nowhere but at Covent Garden; and I had to go back to the Duchess and tell her that quick as she was, Mr. Gye was quicker, and had so forestalled her that those who wanted to hear Mademoiselle Patti could only do so by going to the Royal Italian Opera House.

There her career began, and steadily it went on, increasing in success daily until she rose to the pinnacle of fame reached by no other singer, adored, spoiled, covered with the most rare and costly gifts from one and

all who could afford to give such brilliant expression to their admiration. Having sung a season in London, and with such an unprecedented result, she was of course at once engaged to sing *aux Italiens* at Paris, the highest ambition of every great singer who demands the *consécration de son talent*, before which grand act of baptism the Parisians do not admit that any artist can be a celebrity. And yet Jenny Lind did without them. *Les Italiens* in Patti's time were no more what they had been in Rossini's time, but from old habit the theatre still was the rendezvous of the nobility and the best society of Paris. There still lived Grisi, Mario, Fraschini, Tamberlik, Penco, Bosio, Frezzolini, Badiali, and Tamburini, although the shadow of what he had been; but all these singers were real Italians, not what Italian companies are now, formed of every possible nation *except* the Italian nation.

The curiosity was great, but great too was the success. The house was curious to behold. There is a certain interest in first performances of any importance in Paris, where everybody wishes to attend because it is known that *everybody* is sure to be there

who is anybody. The *tout Paris* of such an evening, quite apart from what is going on on the stage, is interesting for anyone who has not the habitual run of these 'solemnities,' because he is certain there to meet with all the European celebrities who for the nonce live in Paris, all of whom he knows by name, but whom he has perhaps never seen, still less *coudoyées*. There were ministers, poets, the fashionable beauties posing before each other, eager to see, still more eager to be seen; of course a predominant number of musicians. After the first act the sensation was indescribable, and only proved how sincerely they all thought: 'Oh, she pleased the English public; what does that signify? *We* must judge, and confer or refuse the diploma!' But how did she take them all by storm! One said she had brought the sun into the evening; another pretended she had brought spring into the winter; some who had relations that sang, said very little. I could not catch hold of old Auber, whose unbiassed opinion I wanted so much to hear, he being so great an authority both by judgment and experience. At last, just at the end

of her second act, I caught him, as he slipped away tying his shawl round his neck, speaking to nobody. Hulloa, I thought; can he be disappointed? I ran after him. 'Eh bien, maître,' said I, 'qu'est-ce que vous en dites?' 'Ne m'en parlez pas,' replied he, like a man who refuses to profane in words the exciting impression he carries in his heart, 'ne m'en parlez pas. *J'ai été jeune pendant toute une soirée!*' There was a compliment! Adelina had made him young again for a whole evening. Was it the awaking from the dream, was it the feeling old again; or did he wish to continue the illusion—as children do when they awake from a dream full of sweets and toys, and deliberately shut their eyes, so as to imagine that they continue in fairyland—that made him run away so by himself? I know not. But when next day I met him in the Rue St. Georges all he said was: 'Vous y avez été?' and off he went again, as if there could be no other 'y' in the world, as if it was forbidden to think of anybody else than Adelina Patti, or of any place but the Italian Opera!

Such enchantment she has produced

hundreds of times. It was not, as with so many other great singers, an unusual, an exceptional thing. It was the rule. There is no nonsense that young men did not commit, there is no folly that middle-aged men did not pass through. The enthusiasm of women was even greater sometimes than that of men, and I have seen numbers of ladies, young and old, high and low, who looked up to her as a divinity, as some superhuman being, as a blessed creature to whom it was given to accomplish fairy's work. It is of course quite natural that falling in love with her became one of the regular diseases of younger humanity, and the offers of marriage that poured down upon her began in America when she was not much more than a child, and went on in regular succession when she registered triumph after triumph in every country of Europe. Everybody may remember the affidavit she was obliged to make and publish in the *Times*, some twenty-two years ago, when a young Belgian, a baron I believe, insisted on her having promised to run away with him, and found nothing more cunning to do, when she could not exactly 'remember' him, than

to submit his grievance to the decision of the Court. The result was perhaps not all he desired.

Strange indeed would it be if all those 'loving' creatures really felt that warm attachment, that irresistible sympathy, that unconscious tyrannical magnetism that attaches you to one being in creation more than to any other, and if there should have been no admixture of interest, no thought of participation in her celebrity, in the treasures she had won—in fact no calculation of substantial profit, but only the ethereal happiness of breathing the same air! To be taken for herself! That is the dream of every rich girl who would flatter herself that her worldly possessions have not influenced the choice of her adorer. I once saw a caricature by Gavarni in which two ladies, of rather *demi-monde* appearance, are represented in deep conversation on the world's affairs. 'Les hommes, ma chère, *c'est* tous les mêmes. Une femme pour eux seuls!' But this refusal to share the affections of the beloved one, not only with a rival, but not even with a mother, or with anybody, this so-called jealousy is to

my belief inseparable from any true love. Suppose you had a bank-note for £50,000, or a very large and valuable diamond, would you not be anxious not to lose it, and not let it go out of your sight? I admit that this watching system may become a bore when it goes so far that you want an account rendered of every look; but, *au fond*, it is the most flattering proof you can give of the value set on your possession. In New York I once had a conversation with a very clever and attractive young lady, who, among other misfortunes, was afflicted with two millions of dollars, qui ne devaient rien à personne. She said she would never marry, because she would never believe that a man, even if he wanted her for her own sake, took her for any other reason than for her gold. 'And what,' I asked, 'do you lose thereby? If a gentleman takes you because you are so pretty, the small-pox, a fall from a horse, any accident, may destroy your beauty, and where will his love be if it was for that reason only he took you? If another one falls in love with you because you are so fresh, so young, so lively, time is safe to destroy all that, and your hold on him would

then be lost. But if he takes you for your money, you need only beware of dangerous speculations, and you will always keep the charm that brought him to your feet, and you have nothing to fear.' 'That is one way of looking at it,' she said; and so completely did she embrace my opinion, that, barely a year after, I received an invitation to her wedding with an English nobleman, when she seemed suddenly to have made up her mind that all mercenary motives had flown from this frivolous world and nothing but constancy remained.

'Femme souvent varie,
Bien fol qui s'y fie.'

Adelina Patti—who in the beginning of her career barely made enough to live on, such scanty terms did she receive, when she had, moreover, her family to keep, and to provide some goodly sums for travelling with so numerous a suite — received later on enormous sums; and she now possesses a princely fortune. Men of science, men of celebrity, men of title, offered to marry her; she laughed at all of them, until one came at

whom she did not laugh. The Marquis de Caux, a very distinguished gentleman, who held the position of Equerry to the Empress Eugénie during the Second Empire, was the happy man accepted, and the wedding took place in London; after which they went to the Continent, being, like so many others, the recipients of old shoes and rice-showers. At the time she spoke to me very frankly respecting her plans, and told me how the Empress had encouraged her to go on working for five more years, until she had made an independent fortune, since the Marquis had only 10,000 francs (£400) a year; and that when the income derived from her new fortune secured her an independence, the Empress would receive her at Court as a *dame d'honneur* with some palace honorarium, a position which, so long as she sang for money, she could not hold without wounding a number of vanities and prejudices.

She *has* made her fortune, she has got an independence—where is the Court? what has become of the Empress and her *dames d'honneur?* where is the Marquis? Change, the fate of all things earthly, is perhaps

more the rule in France than in any other country.

A curious feature in Madame Patti's life was that she lived with nearly every one of her professional colleagues on the best possible terms ; and attaching herself to no one in particular, she disliked no one especially, and they all admired, and to all appearance liked her, even forgiving her, as the French say, her successes. There was, however, one singer who made such an unfavourable impression upon her, that not only did she dislike him, but, abusing the excess of power at her command, she insisted on a condition being put into her contract, stipulating that either this tenor was never to be engaged in the same troupe with her, or if previously engaged, she must never be obliged to sing with him ; his name was Nicolini, a Frenchman (Nicholas). It was a sad affair for him, who lived in that same atmosphere of admiration, and would have liked nothing so much as to appear before the public of Russia, of France, of England, anywhere, in a love-duet with the young Queen of Song. But she would not hear of

it, would not speak to him, would not see him.

I cannot possibly pass over the period which followed. Nicolini, madly in love with the woman who would not hear his name pronounced, found the most powerful and unhoped-for ally in her very husband, who called her unfounded aversion childish, and insisted on her receiving him, which ended in her antipathy taking a very different form, added to which reasons of discontentment with her husband which have nothing to do with publicity brought about a separation, to obtain which, legally, Madame Patti offered to divide her fortune with the Marquis, which sacrifice (amounting to one million francs) he accepted. This separation was followed by a legal divorce, which set every further discussion at rest, for in June, 1886, Madame Patti was, amid great public rejoicing in Wales, married to Nicolini.

We have not to note anything here except bare facts, and we will leave all that belongs to the domain of gossip to those friends who make it their business, as Sardou has so convincingly shown in 'Nos Intimes,' to inflate

their friends' quarrels, to endorse their friends' suspicions, to widen in fact every breach until it becomes impassable, and all under the sacred ægis of intimate friendship. Alas! if love is but the highest degree of selfishness, as has often been demonstrated, what is friendship, and who *is* your friend, when it comes to the test? That he is a friend who is kind enough to eat your excellent dinner and drink your old wine, accept a seat in your carriage or in the evening in your box, I will not deny; such self-sacrificing creatures may here and there be found. But few and far between are the friends who stick to you when you have nothing to give, who, as that young lady before mentioned said, love you for yourself, and are happy to do you a service without hope of any return. Friends, in fact, unselfish — that rarely-to-be-found quality. And yet, rare as it is, I met with it in this worldly metropolis in a lady to whom I complained when some 'friends,' to whom a short time ago I had had the good fortune to render signal service, had shown me their gratitude by speaking of me as ill as if

I had been their benefactor through life. I was not then old enough to swallow this pill of bitter experience calmly, and I said to her, 'Madam, I can imagine what in your great position you must suffer from ingratitude—for I know all the good you do—when I, who can do so little, am so very ill rewarded.'

And she gavé me this answer, worthy of a saint in its simplicity: 'Are you surprised that the people to whom I try to do good don't thank me for it? That is their affair!' Satisfied with having done all the good she could, she never gave the matter another thought! 'Il y a encore de grandes âmes de par le monde!'

It is usually said that when men become old they get selfish from having been so many times disappointed and thereby hardened. This would lead us to think that when children we are very good, and not, as a great philosopher has it, that 'man is born in sin.' Certain it is that the innocence, the deeply interesting simplicity of children, cannot survive those storms of life which destroy the bloom of the young fruit. Yet

I will tell here a fact of recent occurrence illustrating children's engaging simplicity which just comes to my mind.

Some children were very anxious to get up some theatricals, to which the parents consented on condition that the children managed them entirely themselves, that they wrote the play, studied and rehearsed it, and did everything required for the performance. The elders were to know nothing about it. When the time came, the desired audience was invited to witness the performance.

Scene the first : an officer, making love to a young lady. Second scene : the wedding. Third scene : the breakfast, during which the bridegroom is summoned to the war, and torn away from the weeping bride, amid general lamentation. Curtain. . . . . Two years elapse, and then the bridegroom returns in glory, with Victoria Cross. Affecting scene on again meeting the lady ; after which the bride goes to the back of the stage and draws aside a curtain, saying, 'Meantime I too have not been idle,' and discloses twelve bassinets, containing twelve babies, represented by twelve dollies.

Great sensation, followed by shouts of uproarious laughter, which quite puzzled the children. They could not possibly make out what there was to laugh at. Dear little innocents! . . .

Now Madame Patti, when she first came before the public, knew only one pleasure, her big dolly. She has since then had other and rather more costly *joujous*. I have mentioned her four parrots given to her on different occasions, but her especial favourite is the one she bought herself, and that is her own dear Charlie; another, as I stated, represents the great American celebrity Ben Butler; then there is one called Jumbo, not on account of its slender waist, but for other particular reasons. But clever as they all are, Charlie beats them hollow. He never makes a mistake in his answers, and whatever you call out to him, he says in reply what he means you to know. Knock at the door, and he'll cry, 'Entr-r-rez!' You ask him, 'How are you?' he will answer in French, 'Pas mal; et vous?' Only once I tried his English hard, and got my reward. I dipped my fingers in water and sprinkled

a few drops over him; he looked at me, lifting up one little black claw, and unctuously and solemnly said: 'You pig.' Rossini, who used to take snuff, not always in the cleanest fashion, said once to Charlie, 'I'll give you a biscuit if you sing something.' Charlie stretched out a friendly claw and said, 'J'ai du bon tabac dans ma tabatière—tierre —tier-r-r-e!'

To tell you incidents of Patti's life would fill an interesting volume. But not having the space of a volume at my disposal, I will mention the very first incident, her birth. Madame Barili, her mother, sang Norma in 1842, on February 18th. While she was singing she felt unwell. She was, however, able to finish the opera. But barely was the black veil thrown over the too loving Druidess than she got her lawful husband to take her home, and in the next hour, which began February 19th, Adelina, whose first cry is said to have been F in alt, was given to the world. Since then she has sung several other notes, including about thirty-six or thirty-seven operas, the most prominent of which are:

'Don Giovanni,' 'Le Nozze di Figaro,' 'Otello,' 'Il Barbiere di Siviglia,' 'La Gazza ladra,' 'I Puritani,' 'La Sonnambula,' 'Lucia di Lammermoor' 'Linda di Chamounix,' 'Don Pasquale,' 'La Figlia del Reggimento,' 'Ernani,' 'Il Trovatore,' 'La Traviata,' 'Giovanna d'Arco,' 'Esmeralda,' 'Don Desiderio,' 'Velleda,' 'Aïda,' 'Crispino e la Comare,' 'Dinorah,' 'Les Huguenots,' 'L'Africaine,' 'L'Étoile du Nord,' 'Marta,' 'Faust,' 'Romeo e Giulietta,' 'I Lombardi,' 'Fra Diavolo,' 'Semiramide,' 'Les Bleuets,' etc., etc.

In life Patti is or appears to be the simplest creature born. She never affects a stupid prudery. She will tell you, as she looks you straight in the eyes (which is one of her great qualities), 'I am the first singer in the world; all the others must concede that.' But she is not on that account anyway more haughty. She is as fond as anybody of a game of billiards, and is prouder of a difficult canon than of her biggest rôle.* She is quite without affectation. Once her

* Perhaps on *that* account they accompanied her with cannon in America?

brother-in-law sitting at the piano began one of those Viennese waltzes that lift you off your feet. Instantly she jumped up, took hold of me, and off we went in a whirlwind, she as light as a feather, 'the which' will prove to you, sweet and kind reader, that there was a time when I was younger than I am now, although I will not say, should the siren wish even at this moment to make me commit the folly of another waltz, that I should have Ulysses' prudence to stuff hair in my ears and resist her. So do I remember reading in a *feuilleton* of my celebrated friend Hanslick (the great critic of the Vienna *Neue Freie Presse* and professor of æsthetics at the University) that all his dignities did not prevent him from flying through the salon in Paris, encircling *la belle* Adelina, and enjoying a waltz, as the young Viennese do with their partners every day.

Shall I, in conclusion, give you an idea of all the *hommages*, presents, souvenirs of every shape and form and value, heaped upon this too fortunate child of the Muses? Go to her any day you like, and you are sure to see something extraordinary arrive, in the

shape of a present. When she sang in Italy, Victor Emanuel the king told her he would come to hear her every night she sang, and, like the *rè galantuomo* that he was, he did come every time. Once during a performance at Florence a lady and a gentleman bent forward from their box to present Madame Patti with a laurel crown. You want to know their names? Mario and Grisi. The Duke of Alba in Madrid presented her, too, with a laurel crown from his box. When she had done singing at Madrid, small bouquets and poems flew through the air attached to the necks of 200 canaries. The Queen Isabella, a very good singer herself, presented her with a brooch consisting of a large amethyst cameo with forty big pearls, and with a pair of sapphire and diamond earrings. The Jockey Club in Paris presented her with twelve laurel crowns the same evening, as if she had twelve heads to wear them all. In Berlin she sang twelve times, and twelve times the Emperor was present. The diamonds she carried away from Russia constitute in themselves a small fortune. In New York last season she wore nearly 300,000

dollars' worth of diamonds. It was rather too much. The entire front of the bodice of her dress seemed a perfect cuirass of diamonds. In the first act of 'Traviata,' she wears the celebrated necklace of emeralds. In the second act turquoise and diamonds. There are four hairpins, bracelets, earrings, rings, and a magnificent pendant. The famous diamond necklace was presented to her in London, eleven years ago, by a number of English ladies. One of her handsomest lockets was given her by Queen Victoria ; a splendid solitaire ring by the Baroness Burdett-Coutts. One of the most beautiful and costly of twenty-three valuable bracelets was presented by a committee of the Birmingham festival, after she had sung in Costa's 'Naaman;' it is set with large diamonds. A magnificent comb, set with twenty-three large diamonds, is the present of the Empress Eugénie. Brooch, earrings, and bracelet, all set with splendid diamonds, were sent by the Emperors of Germany, Austria and Russia, after she had sung before them. But if her jewelry is brilliant, so is her talent; for Gounod said that all his

Marguerites were Northern maidens, but Patti was the only Southern Gretchen, and that from her singers should learn what to do and what to avoid. This seems more or less the opinion of all the world, because everybody is at her feet. Go to see her: not a day passes but now Baron R. sends a big basket, half fruit, half exotic flowers; now a lady sends an immense fan all tortoiseshell with silver and gold inlaid and red marabouts; and so on, and so on. When you have done calculating all that it is possible for you to do, to say, to write, to present, and all that it is impossible to guess, then only will you have an inkling of that perpetual, uninterrupted, universal homage called the life of Adelina Patti. Never has a singer been so spoiled. And what people will submit to from a great prima donna, you may learn from that handsome and *spirituelle* Princesse Belgiojoso's memoirs of a singer, whose name was Josephina Grassini, probably quite unknown to the readers of this sketch. She tyrannized over no less a tyrant than Napoleon I. in the beginning of this century, telling him with her Italian accent, 'Oui, tou

es oun gran général, ma je n'ai pas besoin d'oun général—oun bel homme me plairait mieux; toi, tou es oun petit homme et tou entend le mousique comme oune serin.' And the man who saw kings tremble before his angry look, who bore no contradiction from any living creature—Napoleon—submitted to the handsome contralto meekly. Is not what Voltaire wrote on the statue of Cupid true?—

> 'Qui que tu sois, voilà ton maître,
> Il l'est, le fut ou le doit être.'

What people must have done for love of Adelina Patti you can guess when you see what people of all positions do for her without being in love. Men, young and old, ladies of every age and position, seem to run a race with each other as to who shall commit the greatest folly to win some approbation, a smile, a look, from their adored goddess, Adelina Patti.

CHRISTINE NILSSON.

DO you know Swedish? I am sure I do not; and if in the course of this sketch I should with a very learned air explain to you the meaning of several Swedish words, don't feel humiliated by my extended knowledge of languages. I have only just learnt the few words necessary for my purpose, and there my wisdom ends. The ladies who read these lines are much too young to remember Jenny Lind. I mean her career, for her name most assuredly is known to all. How a little Swedish girl was told that she had a good voice, and if she only was well taught she would be sure to get on; how she was recommended to go to the musical Mecca of Europe, 'Paris,' and was taken in hand by Meyerbeer, who wrote

'Das Feldlager in Schlesien' (Vielka) for her, out of which, later on, he took five or six pieces for his 'Étoile du Nord;' how she revolutionized Europe, and how Jenny Lind in England and in all its provinces, and a very short time after in the United States, made more money than ever any singer had made before her—all this, Madame and Mademoiselle, happened long before your time and recollection.

It was thus, however, that Sweden was introduced to Europe as an extraordinary voice-producing country, and thus it was when, one day in Paris, a young, tall, fair-haired girl was brought to Wartel, the renowned singing-master, that he, inquiring her birth-place, and finding it to be Sweden, at once studied 'the case' with great attention, and, after a searching examination to find out *de quel bois se chauffait cette petite Suédoise*, undertook to make of her one of the great singers of the day, we all know with what success.

Now before I enter into the preliminary details concerning the subject of these lines, Christine Nilsson, let me tell you that Wartel,

that great teacher, is a very clever man, and well knows the tricks of the world. It is very nearly two thousand years ago that a great philosoper said, 'Mundus vult decipi,' a bitter thought launched from the bitter experience of a great observer; but the world wanted then, as now, to be humbugged; the people like to believe the most extraordinary, not to say impossible, advertisements; and you may see every day in the big dailies pills that cure such a number of diseases that a whole column of small print could barely enumerate them all. Among them may be some that only opium cures, and others that only belladonna cures—the one being the most powerful antidote of the other—never mind, whatever may ail you, take one of these pills, and your whole organization is suddenly changed, and you are saved.

It happened to me in America to know a lady of some twenty-eight years (I never knew one beyond that age), who was what is commonly called a *malade imaginaire.* The greatest physicians could not help her. She suffered on Monday from gout, and on Tuesday from paralysis, from consumption on

Wednesday, and on Thursday from dropsy, and so on, and so on. She complained to everybody, asking for help, and so accidentally she came to me. Knowing that her ailments were all humbug, I thought that perhaps the homœopathic principle, *similia similibus curantur*, might with advantage be employed with this sublime sufferer of every known evil, and that thus I might save her from her greatest enemy, from herself. I said to her, 'There is one radical fault in your organization which nobody seems to have hit upon, but which I can plainly see in the pupil of your eye. I will not tell you what it is, because it would frighten you, and you would then not go calmly through the only proceeding that can save you; but if you promise conscientiously to do what I say, and to reveal to nobody what I shall prescribe for you except to the chemist, I know I can save you if nobody else can. Only mind, an indiscretion or a want of obedience, and everything is destroyed. Let me tell you that you have two months to live, after which you are dead or saved for ever, according to the success of my prescription. You will

therefore understand that I will not be held responsible for your death. Will you take your oath that you will do exactly as I say, or not begin at all?' The long speech left her quite unmoved up to the hint that within the limit of eight weeks she might change earthly suffering for heavenly blessing. When she heard that, she became very pale, and asked me did I really consider her condition so dangerous? 'Why,' I said, 'you tell me that every day you suffer from some malady, one opposed to the other, and you fancy that any human organization can resist such a destructive strain? I am not certain even that you will last eight weeks, and if you wish to make certain arrangements, make them at once.' She remained awhile very still and reflective, and then said, 'Is there no hope if you fail, and is there lasting restoration if you succeed?' 'Do what I say,' I replied, 'and I imagine that you may be saved.' Those of my amiable readers who have experience in monomaniacs will bear me out when I say that such cases are not isolated ones, and that even well-educated persons may be found so superstitious that you can make

them believe anything you choose. Well, the lady mentioned, thoroughly broken-hearted at the threatened running out of her lease, and all the more eagerly clinging to life, which she had daily, hourly, declared to be ebbing away, promised everything. I told her then to go to bed at five minutes before midnight, to set an alarum at five minutes to three, then to take a pill which the chemist would prepare for her ; to go to bed again at three, to get up at five minutes to six and take another pill, and sleep until she awoke naturally, and after three days she would feel no woe, no pain, no suffering. I told her, too, should the chemist ask her whether she knew that she was taking poison, to answer, 'Certainly,' and to be deterred by nothing on earth from doing precisely as I told her, if I was to be responsible for the cure. The chemist, strange to say, did not ask her, the pills being made up of

℞ Panis du., gr. $\frac{12}{12}$.
Sacch albi, iij.
Aq. dest., ʒi.
Fiant pil., xij. Sig. Venenum.
To be taken as prescribed.

That is, bread, sugar, and water, inscribed

poison. I have two witnesses living who know the lady, who, I daresay, is still twenty-eight years old, and who, after four weeks of this conscientious cure, entirely recovered, never suffered any more from anything; and if you speak of the great physicians of her or of this country, any day, she will quietly smile at the idea of any one of them having understood her deeply disturbed organization, when, two months before imminent death, she was saved by my advice, taking what she would not for her life betray, but without which she would now be dead. Did I do wrong? From the strict point of truth and inflexible straightforwardness, yes; from the point of the result obtained—her courage recovered, her enjoyment of life regained, her imaginary maladies cured—certainly not. *Mundus* VULT *decipi!*

To return to Wartel. He was in his younger days a tenor, never a very successful one — having suddenly lost what little voice he had. Seeing at that time the unparalleled success of Franz Liszt, he imagined that the power and strength of that great virtuoso, like that of Samson,

lay in his long hair; and he wore his hair so long that all the Philistines were frightened, and being fortunate enough to have no Delilah to betray him, he began to take in pupils—*take in* is the phrase—and adopted a thoroughly new way of teaching them. One must have assisted as a calm and silent spectator at those lessons to find out how combined with real cleverness his humbugging declamations were. He had, however, in the fourth floor of the Chaussée d'Antin, where he lived, not one extraordinary voice, and as General Montecuculi said: 'There are three things essential to bring a war to a successful end—money, money, and money,' so said Rossini: 'Three things are required to make a great singer—voice, voice, and voice.' And although he knew better than anyone that the galaxy of great singers at his disposal for his brilliant compositions were not satisfied with their exceptional voices, but had studied during many years as no singers now would, the fact remains that with pupils without voices there is no success possible for any master. Accident brought the tall, thin, fair-haired Swedish girl to Wartel,

and his penetrating eye at once espied all the importance the cultivation of such a voice must have for his career, and he did not decline to teach her. *Pas si bête!*

But who was that tall, thin, golden-haired girl?

In a little hut among tall pines on the estate of Count Hamilton near Wexiö in Sweden, the hut consisting of two rooms, belonging to a poor forester, on August 20th, in the year 1843, was born a little tow-headed girl, the youngest of seven children, who never spoke unless especially questioned, but continually sang, trying to imitate the birds or the murmuring of the waters, in fact, obeying an inner impulse to imitate the great models of Nature, never having heard anything else. The Sjöabohl (hamlet) of Snugge, to which the part of the forest belonged where she had first seen the light of day, was a few miles distant from Wexiö, and the highest ambition of the poor children was to be able to get to the fair of Wexiö and earn a few pence somehow in that great town of some 1,800 inhabitants. In order to reach that glorious result, little Christine, who had taught herself

to play on a small fiddle which belonged to her elder brother (and which you can see any day you please in the magnificent mansion she has built for herself in South Kensington), entered into partnership with her brother, who was already her inferior as a violinist, and they started out together for the celebrated Wexiö, Christine refreshing herself in the brooks and small rivers by jumping in with her little bare feet, imbibing all the oxygen which that mountain water was capable of imparting to her young and vigorous constitution. On they went, *per pedes Apostolorum*, until they reached on their way Ljung-by (*by* means village), where there was held a small fair, and where the young violinist accompanied her own voice in the few Swedish national songs she then had heard and retained in her precocious memory. With great pride she relates that this her first open-air concert brought her the treasure of threepence halfpenny, forewarning her of the untold wealth which awaited the children at the town fair. Thither, then, they repaired with all the courage that success, glory, and money can give, only that their

treasure very much worried them, because little Christine, for obvious reasons, could not hide it in her stocking, such luxury being for the moment denied her ; so that robbers, if they had but known it, could easily have deprived her of her fortune. Happily they did not know it, and the children arrived a little tired, but hopeful, at the fair. There was suddenly a big audience, who wondered if the violin played Christine, or Christine the violin. When the admiring crowd assembled, it attracted the attention of Mr. Tornerhjelm, the provincial judge, who tried to find out, as every one of us would, what was the matter. For in every country, wherever you see a number of people assembled—call them *Bummler* in Germany, *badauds* in France, or what you like in England—whether the reason be a cab-horse fallen down, or a drunken woman or a refractory baby, within two minutes the crowd will become tenfold ; and in Vienna a friend of mine won a bet that, without doing or saying anything, and without any accident whatever, he would cover St. Stephen's Square—the big *Platz* upon which the cathedral with the famous high tower is to be

found—with a number of curious people. And what did he do, and how did he win his bet? He simply stood before the church, and intently looked up at the spire. A gentleman near him stopped and looked up too, perceiving which, a few young boys immediately followed suit, and within five minutes my friend who had first stopped quietly went away, and left an ever-increasing mass staring at the flag, at the sun—they did not a bit know at what; but there was the crowd he had promised to gather. Well, fortunately for the great singer, the judge, a man over six feet high, looked over the shoulders of the people at the little girl who formed the centre of attraction, and then he saw and heard, over and above the scraping of the little fiddle, what he thought the sweetest and most enchanting *timbre* of voice he had ever heard before. A highly educated man, and accustomed to read in the physiognomy of the people who were brought before him, their character and probable capabilities, he spoke first to the boy, then to the little girl, and there and then laid the foundation of the great prima donna's fortune by the

present of untold wealth—a sixpence. Christine, already frightened with the responsibility of carrying her Ljungby funds, suddenly grown rich beyond her expectations, with great firmness insisted on their immediate return to the only place where so much money could safely be invested or deposited —their father's hut.

You can see, in one of Christine's great salons, the little skirt which did not descend to the ankle, the *toilette de jour* of her first concert, minus the least bit of shoes or stockings; and the cherished portrait of two *bons paysans Suédois*—father and mother —in a rich gold frame, which cost more than a long series of concerts at that time could have brought her.

Although not quite so rich as she became hereafter, she returned with the *first money earned* from her first success in public, to her father, who saw, real and alive, 9½d., the produce of two concerts, in his daughter's little hand. I don't know whether he dreamed of several acres of land, or a palace to build, or some speculation to enter upon, with the sum at his command; but certain it

is that the idea suddenly struck him that some heavenly blessing must have descended upon the head of his youngest child, and that she might be singled out by Providence, like that other peasant girl, Jeanne d'Arc, to accomplish great things, perhaps the glory of her country, or some financial revolution—for had she not brought home 9½d. through simply appearing in public? Great things evidently were in store; but how to reach them? Strange as it may appear, the great success and the great financial result remained for a few days without any further consequences; and although the capital brought home was far from being exhausted, the triumphal dreams of other days following with other ninepence-halfpennies in quick succession, seemed to lead, as dreams always do, to some disappointment—when, just as a second artistic journey was contemplated, the above-mentioned judge, who naturally had had some difficulty in unearthing the whereabouts of his small prima donna, came straight upon the father, and asked him would he allow his Honour the provincial judge to take temporary possession of the youngest

child, and if she were found to be so intelligent and gifted as she was supposed to be, to give her the education which would perhaps make the name of little Christine somewhat better known? The father referred him to the mother, as every well-bred father will; and the mother, with that abnegation that makes of motherly love the only reliable, never-to-be-found-wanting love in the world, instantly consented to separate herself from her beloved child—a youngest child to boot—so long as that sacrifice could do the child any good.

This little preliminary arranged, the first important step in Christine's life was made. She was put under the protection of the judge's celebrated friend, Mademoiselle Vallerius (the *nom de plume* of Baronne de Leuhusen), who was duly informed that the new Swedish miracle sang at the rather early age of three years at the fair! The Baroness took the child with her to Halmstad, and instructed her herself until the little girl was thirteen. The celebrated Mademoiselle Vallerius had acquired fame in her country by several distinguished literary works, among

which ' Le Roi des Mers ' is the best known. She gave Christine what is called a severe education, made her learn German and French, the piano, and singing, so far as you need teach a lark to do what he can't help doing. She retained the girl with her when she had to go to Gottenborg, and kept her firm to her German studies and her French singing up to her fifteenth year. She then took her to Stockholm, where, under Franz Berwald, she continued and perfected her study of German and harmony. At the same time she studied her violin so conscientiously that, when sixteen years old, her old friend and patron, Tornerhjelm, told her that she should at his expense go to Paris, and there earn the laurels for which her young head was destined, and that she must, before leaving, give a great concert at Stockholm. Christine was long in doubt whether she should devote her life to the fiddle or to singing, so she decided upon coming before the public in both capacities, and played a concerto by Mr. Berwald in the Grande Salle Lacroix; and there, too, she sang the grand aria of Alice, in French. In France it is not

such an unusual occurrence to hear a sixteen-year-old girl singing a piece to perfection. Well, but there is a circumstance that must be borne in mind, viz., that the future 'diva' had never known what that especially brilliant institution, 'Le Conservatoire,' etc., could do; and her musical education, though kindly aided, had in reality to rely upon the grand gifts which, with a lavish hand, Nature had showered upon her.

I do not wish to mention the name of the teacher who very nearly forced her voice out of all proportion, and had he succeeded would have deprived the musical world of one of its phenomenal stars; but I will say that his name begins with an M., an ill-fated initial with which the name of an Italian singing-master in this very city begins, who understands a great deal about forming a voice, as you will instantly be able to judge from the following fact. During the summer of 1884, a young man, splendidly built, called on me, having previously demanded an appointment, explaining that he had my advice to ask in a matter of paramount importance to him. He asked me what he should do under rather

perplexing circumstances. He was the happy possessor of a very sweet tenor voice, of which he gave an instant proof. He was recommended to go to a certain Italian singing-master for the purpose of developing the strength of his voice. This gentleman recommended him to take hold of the back of a chair with both his hands, and then, pressing on it as hard as he could, to shout with all his might. Did I think that was the right way to go to work? I replied that, if his object was to break his voice, he would undoubtedly reach that object by so doing, otherwise I could not imagine any good it could do. Such murderous ignorance I really think ought to be brought before the Court, because either intentionally or unintentionally that young man would have been deprived of what he had to make a living from. He is now engaged, and sings at a theatre of not too big proportions in the sweetest way possible, and would certainly not have a tone left in his throat had he followed the advice above indicated. And perhaps I may be allowed at this opportunity to tender the advice of my long experience to those who

begin singing. Before all, let a competent master tell them what sort of a voice they have got. To treat a mezzo-soprano as a contralto may be as hurtful to it as to treat it as a high soprano. The *tessitura*—that is, the principal position in which the voice moves in singing—is of decisive importance for the singer, and it is a well-known fact that keeping the voice in exercises of proper limits will extend the faculty of singing lower or higher notes, which can only be gained by well-calculated study ; while nothing is more likely to result in total loss of voice than shifting it out of its proper limits, or forcing it beyond the limit of its power, be that above or below.

Mademoiselle Nilsson, discovering in time the danger to which Monsieur M. exposed her, left him for Wartel above mentioned, who made her undergo three years' study—of what do you suppose? Opera? No. Oratorio? No. Songs? By no means. He made her sing for two-and-a-half years on *ā*, *a*, *ee*, on every note of the scale, and only the last six months with words. Those who deem this an extraordinarily long trial, or an

exaggerated, unnecessary course, may take it for granted that, if they do not study so conscientiously, they will not stand the test of twenty-five years' concerts and operas, as Patti and Nilsson did, and retain the voice so full and fresh.

During the time of her studies with Wartel, Meyerbeer heard her, and, anxious to secure the brilliant young voice, offered to give her the part of Ines in the 'Africaine' to sing, but she had the strength of mind to refuse the tempting offer, in order to continue her studies, and devote herself to the Italian career. With this view, she accepted, after a time, an engagement from Merelli to make her *début* in Italian opera at Brussels under his management. Her heart beating, she made the journey, full of anxiety, discussing with herself all the chances *pour et contre,* and would she not do better to Italianize her name? and so on. But while man proposes, the Lord disposes; and the dreams of the young *débutante* received a certain and rather fortunate 'smash,' when she heard on arrival that manager, company, Italian Opera, all had — exploded! and

nothing remained for her to do but to discard all her dreams, and turn back to Paris to everyday life.

It happened that at the Théâtre Lyrique she heard Madame Carvalho in the 'Reine Topaze,' where this eminent singer developed all the resources of her grand vocalization. Then occurred to Christine Nilsson that which occurred to Correggio, when in the picture gallery of Prince Borghese he stood before a Titian, and the Prince, unknown by the young painter, entered the room, and full of eagerness, Correggio ran to him, saying: 'Who has painted that picture?' The Prince told him, with a smile which eloquently showed how certainly the Prince expected him to be thunderstruck with the great name Titian; but Correggio, without any absence of modesty, yet with that dignity of genius which feels its value, replied, 'Anch' io son pittore!' ('I, too, am an artist!')

Far from being overawed by Madame Carvalho's art, although fully appreciating and admiring it, Nilsson's only desire now was to enter that theatre under the auspices

of its great *directrice;* and with that quiet but persevering strength of will which made her reach the highest step of the artistic ladder, she managed to get an appointment to sing on the stage before the manager, Carvalho, and Wartel. Then she sang two pieces—the 'Variations' by Rhode with all their trying passages and staccatos, and the unavoidable 'Robert, toi que j'aime,' which for thirty years was the *pierre de touche* of all the pupils who aspired to great honours. The result of this trial was that Mr. Carvalho engaged her *séance tenante* for three years, at a salary of 2,000 francs per month for the first year, and three months' leave (paid all the same); 2,500 per month the second, and 3,000 the third year—that is to say, she received £1,000 the first year for nine months, £1,200 the second, and £1,450 the last year. She made her *début* at the Théâtre Lyrique, on October 27th, 1864. On the stage, therefore, she has been singing over twenty years. Verdi's 'Traviata' having been translated for the occasion, she made at once an unforeseen sensation, and I remember having heard people discuss what might be the reason of

this sudden success. Said one, 'She is so young and pretty, she has such a commanding figure, and shows in all her candour such a determined will.' 'Oh no,' said another; 'it is by no means her appearance; it is her extraordinary voice, and the command she has over it. Yet there is something strange in her voice (*étrange dans sa voix*).' 'Well,' said one of the greatest singers Paris has known, 'is it not sufficient to have something unusual, something that no one else has, in the *timbre* of the voice; and may it not be, that, because all the qualities you mention are combined in her, she made such an extraordinary impression upon her audience?'

And that was probably the reason. Producing a great and an instantaneous effect requires so many different qualities, that it is only given to those few who combine them all, to reach this exceptional favour. The voice alone cannot do it, nor study, nor brains, nor that certain charm. Many persons have the one or the other, and yet reach not beyond the line of ordinary height in public favour. But because it is so rare

to find all these qualities in one artist, there are so few who really succeed.

It is no trifle to confront a big audience for the first time — and those who know Paris understand what a *première* in Paris means, what an audience which you never get together again after the first night, must be to a singer who has to appear before a jury composed of all that is illustrious and clever, so that nothing escapes them that is not properly done, nor the smallest *nuance* of cleverly executed acting or singing; but frightened though she could not help being, she came out of the struggle with flying colours. The strange part of it, however, is, that although she sang without especial emotion before her success, anxiety seized upon her afterwards, and she got as nervous as a little schoolgirl becomes at her examination. She sang then in quick succession 'Traviata,' 'Marta,' Donna Elvira in 'Don Giovanni,' 'Sardanapale,' 'Les Bluets,' and Astrafiammante, the Queen of the Night, in Mozart's 'Zauberflöte,' three times a week, sixty-seven performances in all. It is in this latter part that she showed the extent of

her voice, reaching up to F in alt, and the extraordinary travelling power of her staccati.

It was during the *congé* (leave) of 1866 that she came to London, and sang at Her Majesty's with the same great and instantaneous success as in Paris. On her return to France at the expiration of her three years' engagement with the Théâtre Lyrique, she was engaged at the Grand Opéra, where Ambroise Thomas, at a loss to find an Ophelia for his Hamlet, seeing that the fair-haired, poetical, dreamy-looking Swede combined all the required qualities for this difficult rôle, entrusted her, as they there say, with the *création;* and she then remained three years, a member of the first lyric theatre in France, which with our modest neighbours means the first in the world.

Her *représentation d'adieu* at the Théâtre Lyrique was well calculated to make a girl of twenty-three years lose her head. Besides the shouts and noisy demonstrations of applause in which the excitable French people indulge with their favourite pets, she was literally covered with flowers, and a procession, formed after the performance, wanted

to take the horses out of the carriage, which she begged might not be done, when her demonstrative admirers insisted on surrounding and accompanying her home, for a new demonstration, uproarious and musical, until she came out on the balcony, and with the obligatory emotion, and the obliging tears in the voice, expressed her inability to describe her gratitude. The world is a stage, and we are the players on it. How often does this comedy, played by us with each other, repeat itself!

It is but natural that, after so many triumphs in France and England, she should have been engaged for America, and there carry everything before her. I was more than once present when people arrived at her house in New York to talk business to her, and the throng of visitors was such that the room filled and emptied and refilled perpetually; and many a time numerous men of business, terrified to have to wait so long before they could hope to get near the too-much coveted prima donna, took their departure in despair, hoping for better luck another day.

Christine Nilsson's first tour in America, being nothing but a concert tour, brought her a million of francs net profit. The manager made 60,000 dollars besides, and her agent laid the foundation of the fortune he enjoyed by the percentage of that tour. I know that at her last appearance there, having exhausted all that the florists could do in garlands, wreaths, laurels, crowns, or letter-devices, they brought her two gigantic lilac-trees on the stage which it took six men to carry.

To give you an idea to what an extent the highest of the land were desirous to fulfil a wish barely expressed, I will here copy a letter written to her by a United States senator, Mr. Hawley, whom she had occasionally asked for some autographs, and who sent the following letter to London after her departure from America, accompanied by a splendidly bound volume.

'UNITED STATES SENATE,
'WASHINGTON, *July 12th*, 1884.

'DEAR MADAM,

'I had the honour to meet you at dinner at President Arthur's a few weeks ago. While several guests were seeking to exchange written cards with you,

you said that you would be glad to get autographs of all the senators; and, as in duty bound, I promised to obtain them. I beg you to accept with my respectful compliments the accompanying volume, containing autographs of the President, all the Cabinet, all the justices of the Supreme Court, and all the senators. The temporary absence of some senators delayed the completion of the work.

'I remain, madam,

'Your obedient servant,

'JOS. R. HAWLEY.'

In private life I can only say that she was the most reliable friend: a word of hers, a promise, was as sacred as a signature with two witnesses. I by no means infer that she is not so now, but neither can I say that she is, because I have lost sight of her. Certain it is that she gives herself no airs, and although she is fully aware of her position and her value, she does not pretend, as so many other singers do, to be descended from royal blood or some princely family, and to have come down (*sic*) to the state of an opera singer. I can quote a mother of an American singer, who, speaking of her daughter, said to me: 'Is it not a pity she should be an artist—she a lady bred and born?' Mdlle. Nilsson is the daughter of Swedish

peasants, and the photograph of her father and mother, in their national labourers' costume, is one of the ornaments of her salon, as above remarked; and so is the spinning-wheel of her old grandmother, not the one which she has rendered celebrated in the second act of 'Faust,' but the genuine old granny's wheel in its venerable antiquity.

Truth to say, there are some other photographs too. There are no less than three albums full of princes' autographs, with or without their portraits. There are the King and Queen of Spain, with the following inscription: 'À Madame Christine Nilsson. Souvenir affectueux de ses admirateurs. Christine, Alfonse.' There are the signed portraits of the Crowned Heads of Sweden, Russia, Denmark, and Austria; then there are the Royal Families of England, France, Naples; any amount of Ministers, etc. She has been decorated by the King of Sweden with his medal in diamonds. She holds the great gold medal for art and science from the Duke of Saxe-Coburg; etc., etc. She has a set of diamonds and emeralds from the Emperor of Russia, and

from the Empress a set of rubies, brilliants, and pearls. A wonderful Hungarian opal, remarkable both in size and beauty, is a present from the Emperor of Austria. An antique set of pearls, brilliants, and emeralds from the Emperor Napoleon III. is particularly interesting, because it represents Faust and Marguerite, and can be taken asunder, forming different pieces of jewellery. One of the presents she prizes most came from Her Majesty the Queen, who heard Madame Nilsson at Windsor, and with her own hands put a bracelet of rubies and diamonds on her wrist, to which a little story is attached. The fact is that Madame Nilsson had been asked by some nuns who keep a school for poor girls, if she would be so extremely kind as to sing once to those little ones, as it would make an impression on them which they would never forget. Madame Nilsson, too happy to do so much good with so little trouble, promised to come, and fixed a certain evening. But what should happen but a visitor, Her Majesty's bandmaster, called on Madame Nilsson—the bearer of Her Majesty's order for Madame Nilsson to

sing at the Court concert at Buckingham Palace on that very evening. Of course you suppose that she instantly sent to the nuns to express her regret not to be able to sing to the children that night on account of the Court concert? Not she! She told Her Majesty's bandmaster that she was very sorry not to be able to accept the Queen's invitation for that evening, as she had an engagement which she could not evade; and that at any future opportunity she would be happy to receive Her Majesty's command, but that she could not sing at Court that evening. Not obey the Queen's command? Not sing at Court? Why, every artist coming to London desired, before all, the honour of being invited to Court! What was he to do? That 'was his concern,' Madame Nilsson said; she could not and would not break her word. Trembling returned the messenger, revolving in his mind how he would lay before Her Majesty Madame Nilsson's message that she had something else to do. However, there was no mincing matters; he had to say it. But what was his astonishment when, instead of

the royal frown he expected, he heard the august lady say, 'Oh, I know—I know. I have been told what that engagement is, and a right noble heart she has! Put Madame Nilsson down at once for the next Court concert, and ask her what day she can give me the pleasure of singing to me personally at Windsor.' Fleet, like a deer, to Madame Nilsson returned the royal messenger to take her orders, and thus Madame Nilsson was invited to Windsor, and by royal hands adorned with the bracelet above mentioned.

Madame Nilsson is by no means *altière.* She is most cordial with those with whom she is friendly. She pretends to no ceremony, but I would advise nobody to mistake her courtesy and venture to take any liberty. It happened once in New York that a gentleman *entre deux âges* thought it fine fun to take advantage of being alone with her and make her a rather demonstrative declaration of love. But Madame Nilsson got hold of both his wrists, her Swedish blood was up, the sinew inherited from an agricultural father did not fail her, and, shouting for a servant to go for a policeman, she held her

would-be *galant* as in a vice until the desired policeman arrived, when she handed him over to the authorities, who, two days afterwards, examined her as a witness, and would have given him a fortnight's imprisonment without option of a fine, but that he begged to be allowed to pay a penalty instead, and threw himself upon her generosity to obtain this commutation for him, which she did, under the promise that he would never call on her, never annoy her, in fact in no way verbally or by writing try to approach her again, which promise I dare say he faithfully kept.

I come now to a point which, in truth bound, I must state, and which is like the black dot on a brilliant butterfly's wing, and this is a comparison between Madame Nilsson and Madame Patti. Although in certain declamatory dramatic parts Madame Nilsson seems to sing with more passion than Madame Patti—who is, above all, charm and grace—she undoubtedly is much less of an attraction, speaking from a financial point of view. What I am going to say might appear a paradox, but although a very curious

phenomenon it is strictly accurate. Madame Patti is stronger in operas where she has not a tragic part to perform. Her figure is not commanding; her manners and ways have nothing dramatically grand; and inimitably graceful as she appears in such parts as Rosina in the 'Barbiere di Siviglia,' in 'Linda di Chamounix,' as Zerlina in 'Don Giovanni,' and in 'Traviata,' she could not play such parts as the Africaine, in which Madame Lucca, who is not an inch taller than she is, appears with commanding majesty, filling the stage by her great talent as an actress. Madame Nilsson naturally has the advantage of her appearance over both these celebrated singers, and she has over Madame Patti —and here comes the seeming paradox— the advantage of being as cold as ice. She feels nothing of what she sings; but being very clever and shrewd, she calculates her effects so well that the audience is impressed by the semblance of her being deeply moved, and I have found her singing certain dramatic songs which never touched herself a bit, with an effect upon the audience which I doubt whether other singers could produce,

although, or perhaps because, they feel it so much more.

But those effects of Madame Nilsson are not *de longue haleine;* they are momentary, and therefore more prominent in songs than in a whole rôle. Moreover the law of nature, following a certain progressive rule of development, has been so powerful in the case of Madame Nilsson, that her respiration seems to be slightly impaired, and it becomes a question of practical trial, since for years she has not been seen on the stage, whether she would be able to sing a whole part through an evening without difficulty. I do not exactly doubt the fact, nor can I, as a matter of deduction from previous experience, affirm it, because she is not the same she was many years ago. The three prima donnas mentioned have all grown stouter as the *quarantaine* approached—so Nature wills it, and her law you cannot avoid—but none of them to the same extent; and if Madame Nilsson is not prevented from singing a rôle from one end to the other, as she may or may not be, the *embonpoint* which her healthy and robust organization was sure sooner or later to ac-

quire, must of necessity force her into another category of parts, for it is inadmissible, for instance, that she should sing Marguerite in 'Faust' as a rather inconceivably developed girl of sixteen, which is the supposed age of inexperienced and innocent 'Gretchen.'

Nor can it be said that the power of attracting audiences—that electric attraction, that invisible yet undeniable charm between public and performer, which never deserted Madame Patti in any country, and which for twenty-five years never abandoned Madame Lucca in her native country—is the quality which Madame Nilsson can boast on the stage. Hence managers do not seem so eager to engage her as Madame Patti, who never was 'to be let' since her first season. In America, where Madame Nilsson's first *tournée* in concerts was one of the most signal successes ever achieved by any singer, when she came the second year and sang on the stage, the result was not so happy. The reason seems to me to lie within this very simple aphorism, that you should not go beyond the possible limits of your powers. Madame Nilsson's repertoire is very limited. Her attraction, be

the reason a palpable or an undiscoverable one, is not the same as that of Madame Patti; yet the demands she makes on every management are regulated by the prices which Madame Patti asks. Undoubtedly Madame Nilsson is a great artist, a dramatic singer of no mean value, and she has made a great name for herself; but everything in the world is only comparatively great and good, and even a diamond of great purity and rare beauty, worth a great deal of money, may not be worth so much as the Koh-i-noor. From this too frequent misapprehension and mistaken judgment of what one's own capacities may be worth, arise so very often disappointments which would easily be avoided by reasonable appreciation of that great wisdom of life which the Greek philosopher expressed in two words: 'Know thyself.' Nobody will dispute a Guardsman's claim to be one of the tallest men known if he be six-feet-six high, and in olden times he might have been called a giant. But even he would be laughed at if the idea of his unusual height should induce him to try to light his cigar at the flame of a street lamp.

However, it may be stated in favour of Madame Nilsson that it is not talent alone which commands such high, and, in the case of Italian opera singers, it must be conceded, unreasonable prices. What a manager can afford to pay for, is what a singer '*draws*.' Whether beauty, talent, curiosity, or any reason whatsoever makes the public fill the house when the artist in question appears, the moment the manager is certain that on announcing the name the sale of tickets will bring something more than what he has to pay, he has an evident interest, be it small or large, in engaging that artist. But whatever may be the beauty, the talent, or the voice of a singer, if the sale of the tickets does not exceed, say, ninety-nine pounds on an average, paying him or her one hundred pounds is an evident loss, and no man of business will consent to risk it.

Now Madame Nilsson, who came here when she was barely twenty-four years old, her voice in all its freshness and beauty, her figure slim, tall, flexible—advantages which cannot in the ordinary course of events last over twenty years—was paid a very moderate

price, and was of course fully worth it because she 'drew' more than she was paid. Suddenly she took it into her head that she would never be thought to be on the top of the tree if any artist received more than she, and she jumped at the conclusion that she owed it to herself to ask the same terms as Madame Patti. Well, not only was there sometimes not so much in the house as she was paid, but even when there was, she took it; and out of what money was the manager to pay all his other expenses? She would not abate one iota from her demands, and as in commercial parlance the directors 'could not see it,' and since she has thought fit to dispense with her very clever agent, fancying she could do her business herself, she remains for years without an engagement on any stage.

That she has not been singing before the public except now and then in concerts is, therefore, a regrettable fact. All the more regrettable that her voice is as brilliant, as sympathetic, as full and metallic, if not so extended in the upper registers, as it ever was. Her lower notes have even acquired a richer, fuller, more organ-like sound than

they had before. Madame Nilsson has no need of more money. She has bought a site at South Kensington whereon she has built a house, ornamented and decorated with all possible taste, and with a number of rare works of art, which naturally represent the collection of *hommages* which many friends, admirers, whole communities, have laid at the feet of their spoilt goddess. Among these are to be found valuable works by living masters, and tokens of admiration presented to her during her brilliant career. There is to be, I presume, a special room for the '*couronnes*,' whereas the pictures have been distributed over the house. Among the *couronnes* is one in real gold presented to her by the public of Russia; one forms a ring with a deep blue eye, and a diamond tear most naturally glittering in it. Here and there are some *bibelots*, such as an opera-glass presented by the Reine Amélie, representing a nightingale; two charming lamps in old Sèvres; one of the most curious brooches was sent to her anonymously; and to this day she does not know who the wealthy admirer was who, at one o'clock in the morning, after a

performance of 'Marta,' rang the bell, dropped down the iron gate of the area a small parcel, and when they tried to find out who had rung, nothing gave the slightest indication of the presence of any man or woman, but inside the package a neat little box was found containing what was styled 'The last rose of summer,' a wonderfully cut and brilliantly ornamented rose, evidently alluding to Moore's 'Last Rose of Summer,' which Madame Nilsson had sung in the opera 'Marta,' where Flotow incorporated it.

For the salon, which will soon become one of the sights of London, the pictures, partly presented, partly bought, are Madame Nilsson as Ophelia, painted by Cabanel, presented by the Duke de Galliera; the Princess Metternich, life-size; the famous 'Two Monks' by Muratori; 'Le Pays des Fruits d'Or' by Landell, said to be worth 100,000 francs (£4,000).

There is also a charming picture by Fragonari representing a little girl barefoot, lifting up her dress with an *air malin*, not unlike the little Swedish violinist going to the fair and making the first heap of money,

consisting of 9½d., which heap has slightly increased till it has bought a princely residence for one of the princesses of the art.

The little peasant girl tried hard to please the passers-by, until one of them, more far-seeing than the others, was struck with the voice, the charm, and the intelligence of the child that became known to the world at large under the famous name of—Christine Nilsson.

MARIO.

A STAR has vanished from the horizon—a great, celebrated and admired artist has left the world, a man beloved, spoiled, lionized to a degree almost without precedent. So far as it is possible to foresee, there is no probability of anyone stepping into his shoes for some time to come.

Giovanni Battista Matteo, Cavaliere (not Marchese) di Candia, better known under the pseudonym of Mario, the last of the great tenors, succeeded the incomparable and unequalled Rubini, and although tenors after him were exorbitantly paid none followed that came near him, because the reign of the great artists, for self-evident reasons, is gone.

What are these self-evident reasons? The voices are born just as before. The ambition to attain the acme of gold and glory of course still exists. But the time is past when, in order to reach that height, singers had to study under masters who kept them for years to their studies, so that they should be models of purity of intonation, of faultless execution, the art of imperceptible respiration, etc. In those days audiences were exacting; yet Mario, who had not made those necessary studies, thought that his handsome appearance, and the wonderful *timbre* of his exceptional voice, must conquer the first place. But he had the mortification of hearing, at one of his first performances, the cry: 'Pas d'amateurs—Rubini—pas d'amateurs!'

Alas! *altri tempi altri costumi;* if there were now an amateur with a voice like Mario's, study or no study, he would be received with open arms everywhere, and dictate his own price. Anyhow, after having been heard at the Académie, or at the 'Opéra ——al,' as a French journalist a short time ago wittily called it, because it has so frequently changed from Opéra Royal

to Imperial and National, that it is only safe to write it down as 'Opéra ——al,' he saw that his career depended on singing Italian, and to the *Italiens* he went for his perpetual glory. Who was his master? He himself. Who was Madame Adelina Patti's master? She herself, and not Maurice Strakosch, as it was said. Because, if so, how could you explain that he never formed another pupil who could even reach to Madame Patti's ankle?

Mario had a number of Italian professors here in London who went through his *rôles* with him, to teach him how to sing his parts, because he was not what one would call a musician. One of them, an excellent professor and formerly a celebrated singer himself, nevertheless told me, 'It is we who learned from him how to sing, not he from us.'

To give an idea of Mario and of his exceptional organization, which adapted itself to anything he chose to try, it will be necessary to mention, in a perhaps rather disconnected manner, what some of his most intimate friends have told me, together with what I recollect from my personal experi-

ence; we shall thereby arrive at truth, and rectify a number of incorrect statements.

The first indication of his desire for a professional career is mentioned in Henry Greville's 'Diary,' October 15th, 1837, p. 116:

'I live a great deal with De Candia, with whom I formed a close acquaintance in London, and whom I saw almost daily. Our acquaintance, from a similarity of tastes, and perhaps from a great dissimilarity of opinions, and still more from the interest which his unfortunate position excited in me, has quickly ripened into friendship. He has a great deal of talent and facility, particularly for music, having one of the finest voices I ever heard, and a good deal of imagination (of this, indeed, too much for his own welfare), and I think he is worthy of a better lot than that which has fallen upon him. As it is, it seems probable that, for want of other means of gaining for himself an independence, he will be obliged to resort to the stage as a profession, and I think it not improbable but that, with study and with his remarkable advantages of looks and voice, he may rise to great eminence in this very thorny career.

'I have endeavoured to persuade him that independence should be his first object, and that notwithstanding all the scruples which a man of birth and education may justly entertain against embracing a profession which is considered as more or less inferior to any other, still there is nothing, or there need be nothing, degrading in it, or anything of which a man to whom no other road of gaining an independence is open, should be ashamed.'

The revelation of his great tragic talent dates from the night when, prevented from singing, he was replaced at a moment's notice by Roger, who consented to take the part provided he might sing with Madame Viardot (in the 'Prophet'). This roused Mario to a consciousness of what he could do, and—he did it. It will be seen that Théophile Gautier foresaw that Mario would acquire what at that time he had not yet mastered—dramatic power:

'C'est un rossignol qui chante dans un bosquet. Il excelle à rendre les pensées tendres, l'amour et la mélancolie, le regret de la patrie absente, et tous les sentiments doux de l'âme; ce n'est pas qu'il soit incapable d'énergie et de vigueur,—bien au contraire; mais le caractère de son talent est essentiellement élégiaque. Il a quelque chose de pastoral et de bucolique, et nous rappelle un beau berger grec chantant, en couplets alternés, au pied d'un laurier-rose, Galatée la fugitive. Attendons que l'avenir développe en lui les qualités plus sérieuses de son talent.'

Grove's 'Dictionary,' so correct, so admirably written in many instances, is very unreliable with regard both to Mario and Grisi. It is there stated that 'Mario, Conte di Candia, was born in 1812 at Genoa—the

greatest singer the present generation has heard;' came to Paris in 1837; that he married Madame Grisi here in London, and had three daughters, (statements made both in the articles 'Grisi' and 'Mario'). He was, as I stated before, neither Count nor Marchese. The present generation, strictly speaking, cannot have heard him at all as a great singer, which he was thirty or forty years ago. He was *not* married to Madame Grisi in London, and he had not only three but six daughters by her; and he was born in 1808 at Cagliari, and not in 1812 at Genoa; and with all the admiration he so justly excited, he cannot be said to have been the greatest tenor of the century, because his wonderful gifts were not developed by persevering study like the equally wonderful voice of Rubini, who surpassed in this respect every singer before or after him. The absurd story of a famous Italian singer being formed by singing for two years continually the same piece ought certainly never to have been repeated by any serious writer. But the intense, persevering, uninterrupted studies of Rubini and Lablache, the greatest singers of

their age, were never made by Mario, who at first was only an amateur, but who subsequently paid attention, and, I am bound to say, with the rarest modesty, to any good advice given him by reliable musicians, whether they were composers or performers. When he was on a tour with Sainton, the well-known French violinist, he used to leave the artists' room and stand in a corner on the platform to listen to the 'Faust' fantasia in which Sainton had introduced the tenor air 'Salve dimora,' which he sang on the violin with the taste and expression of which he has given so many instances; and on one occasion Sainton returning from the platform, and meeting Mario for the third or fourth time outside the artists' room, asked him: 'Qu'est-ce que vous faites ici?' 'Je prends une leçon,' modestly and most amiably said Mario. This was in 1869, when he literally saw half the world at his feet.

The story goes that a lady, whose name I shall not mention, followed him wherever he sang. She never spoke to him, never tried to press herself upon him, thereby disarming even Madame Grisi's jealousy; but she never

missed, in whatever part of the world he sang, a single performance unless prevented by illness, which happened only three times in more than thirty years. I saw the lady in America in 1872, where she had intrepidly followed the idol of her life; and I am not sure but that she will very soon follow him to the last resting-place. Poor lady! Except a mother's love—the purest, the most disinterested and perhaps the only lasting one—there are very few examples of such a persevering feeling, extending over a long lifetime, as this—never changing, never asking for any privilege, quietly, persistently, but unboundedly adoring!

Mario was the son of very distinguished parents. His father was General di Candia, Governor of Nizza and Novarra. His mother was a Grizoni of the Colonna family. A Duchess di Colonna is the famous sculptor in Rome who was so great a friend of Rossini. She was one of the few ladies who, though six feet high, was so well-proportioned and graceful, that you willingly forgave her her height. One of Mario's brothers (the eldest), the Marchese di Candia, has

been dead some time. Another, his 'favourite' brother, Carlo di Candia, a general in the Italian army, has a son Stefano di Candia, who attended Mario's funeral, and to whom, after the death of Mario's sister, the little property in Cagliari goes. Mario, shortly before his death, painted a portrait of this brother, enlarged from a miniature, and left it to his elder sister.

Of his early days little is known. He sang as so many voice-gifted Italians do, because he could not do otherwise. Mercadante found him in Concone's school, where he sang bass. 'Che basso,' said Mercadante, 'che basso? È un tenore, e che tenore!' He entered the military service at an early age. He remembered having seen Lord Byron at Nice, who patted him on the cheek, which made a great impression on the boy, not because he was a lord, but because he was told that Byron was the great English poet. I wonder what his impression was when he saw Talleyrand at Paris, the man who warned you always to mistrust your first impression, '*car c'est toujours la bonne.*' He was always led by his first impulse, so much

so that when sometimes they told him at a rehearsal that there was a person in need of assistance, he rarely asked for details; his ever open hand instantly brought forward some silver coins, in many instances even gold, ready to help without ever regretting that he might be *exploité.*

And that, indeed, happened often, because unscrupulous persons, especially his own countrymen, knew that to appeal to him was to secure assistance without any questions being asked; and they played upon his readiness in this regard with such skill that once in London he found himself in debt for no less a sum than £1,400, for which he had not received anything whatever. The fact was that he liked meddling with different arts and professions; photography for instance, whereby he lost a good deal of money. Subsequently he felt quite satisfied with allowing his friends Caldesi and others to come and photograph his family, which was frequently done at Fulham, in his tastefully arranged house adorned with numerous collections and *objets de vertu.* He was very reckless with regard to money, and when some cameo-

cutters asked the loan of something like £400, he never hesitated for a moment, but granted the request by affixing his signature to a bill for that amount. The bill became due and was renewed, until the sum growing little by little, he was asked to pay £1,400. That seemed even to Mario curious, and he sent for an agent of the Opera, a very shrewd business man, who investigated the affair and found that Mario was liable for the original amount of £400 with interest, which he paid, and saved nearly a thousand pounds. Mario had an instinctive horror of writing, even on business matters. One of his daughters, who did the duties of secretary or amanuensis, sometimes asked him to write himself in reply to a letter which might have come from some exalted personage, or on business. 'Very well,' he used to reply, '*j'écrirai demain.*' He never did.

So far as is known, the real reason of his first leaving Italy and coming to Paris, and trying to sing in public, was an *affaire de cœur* something like fifty years ago. He happened to be in Genoa, in momentary danger of life from a threatening husband, and suddenly

determined on leaving for Marseilles, whence he was taken by an Englishman (Admiral Provany), who for his sake delayed the departure of his ship from 9 until 11 o'clock p.m. From Marseilles he went to Paris, rich in hopes and talent, but rather unprovided with ready cash, so that he soon found out that though Paris is a delightful place to live in, dine, drive, dance, and follow the fashions when you can afford it, you are sure to die from starvation there, just as you might in any dingy by-street of London, if you cannot pay for your maintenance, or else you must have the talent so graphically described by Thackeray, to lead a genteel existence 'on nothing,' or what Nadaud calls 'les existences incomprises.' Notwithstanding all the invitations and attentions Mario received, he was too proud to accept assistance in any shape. He then became so poor that he had at one time to go to very cheap lodgings indeed, where several people slept in the same room. In this room he once suddenly awoke, to find an individual kneeling over him, trying to rob him, and demanding his valuables, seemingly determined to go

any length to procure the imagined treasures. 'My money?' said Mario. 'Take what you can find, but please let me continue my dreams and my sleep.' He had literally nothing. But his calmness in only demanding not to have his sleep disturbed did not give him the same advantage as that obtained by Mr. Fechter, who was attacked in New York one night after a performance. Wearing a large paste pin, he had gone down near the East River, where at that time a number of roughs were always ready to cut your throat for half a dollar if they thought they were likely to find anything worth taking on you.

This pin, a theatrical diamond of excellent French imitation, attracted a thief's attention, and he stopped Fechter and roughly asked the time, with the evident intention of seeing whether he could lay hold of a watch. Fechter said he did not know, and ordered him to go his way, whereupon the nigger—a tall, powerful man—laid hold of him; but Fechter, well versed in the *jeu de la savate*, got the man under in no time, when, to the rather unpleasant surprise of

Fechter, a big clasp knife appeared on the scene, and he thought discretion the better part of valour.

'Listen to me, my man,' he said; 'what is the good of your shedding blood, and getting a hemp cravat? I have no money, and no valuables; what do you want?'

'Your pin!' said the man, 'and I'll have it if I swing for it.'

'You shall,' said Fechter, 'only I don't care to go home with my scarf open as if I were drunk. If you will let me have any other pin, you may have mine without a struggle.'

'Agreed,' said the nigger, and took out a rather tasteful turquoise cameo pin, and put Fechter's diamond (?) into his necktie. I leave the reader to judge what his feelings must have been when next day he came to ascertain the value of his 'honestly' acquired solitaire, for which he had given a pin worth at least ten times the price of the stone for which he narrowly escaped becoming a murderer.

I heartily congratulated Fechter on his good bargain, and was not a little amused at his fear that one fine morning he might be

summoned before a magistrate by Monsieur le Voleur for having cheated him into an exchange for a valueless pin. I told Mario this story, and he was much interested ; and told me of an adventure which happened to him in Paris, without such violent struggles, and without producing knives, yet more amusing as a mere conflict of cunning.

Mario was standing before Goupil's picture-shop and staring at one of the engravings, as he always took great interest in everything connected with art. Suddenly he felt a finger and even a small hand inserted in a pocket of his coat, when quick as lightning he got hold of that finger and, turning round, saw over his shoulder the face of what appeared to be a very youthful sinner.

'How now ?' said Mario ; 'if I break your finger, will you cry out and explain how your hand came to be inserted into my pocket ?'

'Oh, je suis si humilié !' said the thief.

'And why ?' asked Mario. 'Is it repentance that makes you feel humiliated, or is it only regret that you were awkward enough to allow yourself to be caught ?'

'Nothing but remorse for my clumsiness,' said the thief, too proud to own repentance.

'Well,' said Mario, who eagerly seized an opportunity to generously forgive, 'I'll propose a bargain to you. There is nothing in that pocket but my handkerchief; that is all you would have had for your pains. Will you undertake to begin operations afresh, and in a manner more worthy of your talents, and lay hold of my handkerchief without my catching you in the act? If you can do so the handkerchief shall be yours—if not, if I catch you a second time, I'll hand you over to a *sergent de ville*.'

'I accept,' said the thief.

'Mind you,' said Mario, 'be warned—I shall hold my hand on my pocket.'

'Bien entendu,' said the thief.

'Well, then,' thought Mario, 'the intellectual duel shall begin at once.' He put his hand behind his back on his pocket and pretended again to stare at an engraving. Barely a minute had passed when he saw his handkerchief paraded by the side of his face by the thief's hand, while his own hand yet protected his pocket.

'Well,' said Mario, 'that *was* well done! How did you do it? Mind you, I do not for one moment dispute your claim. The handkerchief is yours, and you have well won it; but I want to know how.'

'Oh,' said the thief with the assumed modesty of a genius, 'ce n'était pas bien difficile. Monsieur looked at the picture, but continually watched me over his shoulder, holding his pocket with the left hand. The difficulty was to get that hand away for ever so short a time, so as to be able to insert my hand in monsieur's pocket.'

'Well, but how did you do that?' asked Mario; whereupon the thief produced a small piece of straw.

'Don't humbug me,' said Mario; 'tell me the truth. You cannot have drawn my handkerchief through that straw?'

'No,' said the thief, 'I never pretended to have done that. What I did was this. Monsieur held his stick in the right hand and his pocket with the left. So with this little straw I very lightly touched monsieur behind the ear. To remedy that tickling sensation monsieur quickly withdrew his hand, and

scratched the place. That moment I benefited by. Voilà tout,' he added, again assuming his mock modesty.

Mario was so delighted with the witty expedient that, although he never owned it, I am quite sure he gave the thief a napoleon or half a napoleon, most assuredly something, in acknowledgment of his talents.

It has often been asked how it happened that a man of such recognised talent, associated as he was with one who herself earned so much money that at one time of their lives they are said to have made as much as £16,000 to £18,000 in one year—how such a man could have been, near the end of his life, so reduced in circumstances as to require the aid of charity? The reasons are twofold. First, he had very expensive tastes; collecting pictures, sculptures, *bric-à-brac* of all sorts, may lead you through a fortune of any magnitude; and then, as previously indicated, he was a most willing victim to any of his acquaintances who appealed to his charity or generosity. He paid the debts of a nephew three times (not one of those who attended his funeral), not to mention a

number of people who, under one pretext or another, came to 'borrow' money from him.

'Borrow'! what a fine word for extorting money from anybody! I know a gentleman who, whenever a man comes to 'borrow,' says this: 'You want ten pounds. I do not want to lose your friendship. I have invariably found that whenever I lend money to a friend, that friend never returns the money, and goes out of my way in the street. By-and-by he avoids me in society, and finally, seeing a perpetual living reproach in me, becomes my enemy. Now I don't mind losing a little money, though I won't lose ten pounds, and I will not make you my enemy. Allow me then to arrange matters in this way. I will give you two pounds, happy if this can serve you, and we will never mention this amount again; so you will get something, and I shall keep my friend.' I verily believe that his proposal often met with only too ready an acceptance, and he never lost his 'friend,' although he was very rarely troubled by getting his money back.

It is not generally known that Mario came to London before he ever thought of entering the lyric theatres—that is to say, more than fifty years ago (1832)—as a very young and attractive man, son of a nobleman, Lieutenant du Roi à Cagliari, and was received at the Duchess of Cannizaro's, one of the great salons of fashion at that moment. There he met all the celebrated people of the time, and there too his splendid though untutored voice created the first sensation. But the difference of the effect produced on an audience in a drawing-room by an amateur, and on the same people when they sit like judge and jury in the stalls and have the defendant before them on the stage, is great. How often does it happen that a beautiful girl, elegantly dressed, sings with sympathetic voice, amidst a circle of her admirers, in a drawing-room some well-known song, and is immensely admired. Woe to her if from this obliging tribute of friendship she thinks herself entitled to face an audience who have paid and want their money's worth of amusement, and who proceed like experienced buyers—turning the

voice inside out, examining the stuff and the lining, weighing the execution, probing the intonation; looking, in fact, on the performance as a bargain where one side pays so much, and has a right to receive so much value for it from the other. Think, moreover, of the difference of singing to friends in a small space where everything is studiously avoided that could displease you, and of coming out in a vast house alone on a large stage, every glass pointed at you to discover any flaw in a fold, in the colour of your face, totally unconcerned whether the examination appears to you rude, severe, or embarrassing.

I have been told by Mario's daughter that he never got over his nervousness, and the unpleasant feeling of being stared at, at every step he made. Even Lablache, who counted his successes by the number of times he appeared before the public, said once to a friend: 'Gli assi, gli assi mi fanno tremare' ('Your footlights make me tremble—I can't get over it'). I know that there was a time when Mario refused to sing even in a salon. It was in Paris. A

very rich old lady, madly fond of music in general, and of Mario in particular, sent him a perfumed little note asking him to sing one little romance at one of her evening receptions. Would he think 1,500 francs a sufficient compensation for his trouble? Mario wrote no answer, but he informed the messenger verbally that he was very sorry, but being engaged he could not accept the invitation.

But to me, who was present on this occasion, he said:

'Is it worth while putting on a dress-coat for the sake of 1,500 francs?' (£60).

'Perhaps not for you,' I said; 'but I know more than one singer who would gladly submit to the sacrifice.'

This of course was in later times, when his reputation was already in its zenith—about 1860 or 1862. Anyhow, at the time when he had only enchanted the *habitués* of the salon Cannizaro, he left for Paris, and there became aware of the prosaic necessity of making money or being compelled to do without the first requirements of life.

Many of his friends, among others that splendid amateur Prince Belgiojoso, who

himself sang with exquisite taste, and with the pure intonation, the true feeling, and the refined gusto of an artist, showed Mario the folly of throwing away such treasures, and *de gaieté de cœur* renouncing a career which was sure to bring him everything desirable—glory, money, popularity, and the means of satisfying all his grand tastes for artistic collections. So Mario then tried; he received at once what were then considered large sums for a yet unknown name, and he was allowed to sing the second tenor part in 'Robert le Diable,' *i.e.*, that of Raimbaut. Then it became clear, as I stated before, that the public sit in severer judgment on an artist than on an amateur, and although his appearance and his voice pleased, his inexperience, his nervousness, and an obvious fault in the emission of certain vowels prevented his making a success. Singers in general do not take sufficiently into consideration the obstacle that a sound in one language may offer when used in preference to another. Even many years later, when Mario again sang at the French Opera, and there tried one of his great parts—Raoul, in the 'Huguenots'—the

difference of the emission, the 'displacement' of the voice, singing all these French 'ins' and 'ons' instead of the broad open Italian vowels, and even the difference of singing 'ee' where you are accustomed to sing 'A,' and so on, caused him to fail again. It was then stated that the *abonnés*, too difficult to please, and too particular as to pronunciation, found Mario sang with an accent. That was not the reason. Mario had a predilection, caused by the way of bringing out his voice, for certain vowels, and he very often changed his words, taking not the slightest heed whether this pleased the author or not. Now the French do not care to have at their principal opera-house a tenor, a foreigner, instead of what their Chauvinism demands before all—a Frenchman. Even ladies are judged in the same severe manner. Madame Tietjens totally failed there, yet now at this very moment another Austrian *fait la pluie et le beau temps à l'Opéra*, and the French have to accept her, and do accept her *quoiqu'ils en aient*. But there is a reason. . . . It was nevertheless a lucky thing for Mario to have sung at the Opéra, because Monsieur

Ravel, then manager of the Théâtre des Italiens (Italian Opera), heard him, and instantly guessing what advantage he might gain from engaging such a handsome young tenor, secured him for his house.

Mario sang in London for the first time in 'Lucrezia Borgia,' a rather misleading opera, if I may say so, because certain airs in it, for instance 'Di pescator ignobile,' require only warmth and expression, and are sure to be effective without requiring any great body of voice, as was sufficiently demonstrated some ten years ago when an American manager was deluded into engaging a tenor there and then at £800 a month, whom, when he had heard him in another opera, he would have very much liked to get rid of. In 1840, under the management of Lumley* at Her Majesty's, Mario took the part of Pollio to the Norma of Madame Tosi. But this lady being very handsome, as well as a gifted singer, Madame Grisi feared the attrac-

* Sufficient justice has hardly been done to the enterprise, spirit, and judgment of Lumley's management. He was a most accomplished man, with literary as well as artistic tastes, a man of penetrating intellect, and of a liberal mind.

tion might prevent Mario from using all his resources, and *ce que femme veut, Dieu le veut.* He had to give up the dreaded performance, and they went on a provincial tour, under the management of Brizzi, with the result of £6,000 to the good.

I have mentioned Madame Grisi, about whom I can only incidentally speak in so far as her life was interwoven with that of Mario. But I may mention that in some notices of her life a number of inaccuracies occur, one of the most important being that the master to whom she was more indebted than to any other, Mariani, is not even mentioned in Grove's 'Dictionary.' She sang very often, whenever, in fact, there was an opportunity for inserting an air not appertaining to the opera, a *scena d' entrata* composed by Mariani, 'Non stancho di più.' Speaking of tuition, we have to enter into a rather interesting question: How much can an intelligent and gifted pupil learn from a master, and how far can a not particularly gifted pupil be made a singer by a master? What a pupil can learn and should learn from a teacher, neither Mario nor Grisi ever learned

—that is, to be a musician. What you can get from no master—the splendid voice, the dramatic fire, the expression which captivates the audience—both had received from nature in such a degree that the master only became an adviser, like any musician who would listen to a singer and give his opinion as to taste or probable effect. The master can direct pupils who are not extraordinarily endowed, how to sustain the voice, can advise them how to master execution, runs, shakes, scales, etc.; but it is a great mistake to suppose that an able professor can enable *any* pupil not only to sing but also to attain fame and glory; and Mario and Patti are certainly the most glorious proofs that you may obtain both by special grace of nature, whereas the great school which flourished a century and more ago — the school to which Farinelli belonged, and the school which required such a combination of great natural gifts and persevering study, and which produced the constellation of stars under Rossini and Bellini—that school seems to remain without an imitator, because the process of preparation is now thought too long and arduous.

Mario, the most pliable, amiable man in social life, knew how to stand his ground very firmly against any man when he thought it necessary. The Emperor Nicholas, who admitted no contradiction and was feared for his inflexibility, asked Mario once to cut his beard, for the sake of truth to the character. Mario simply declined to do it, and he added that he would rather leave St. Petersburg than uncover his throat and expose himself to the danger of losing his voice. The Empress, knowing what it meant for anyone to oppose the will of the Czar, said to Mario, 'Faites-le pour moi;' but Mario replied, 'Votre Majesté m'en voudrait de Lui obéir, j'y perdrais ma voix,' and he kept his beard. His beard was his only defence, for in winter and summer he walked about with his neck exposed to the air, never wrapping or muffling himself up.

Though Mario earned so much money, he suddenly became so poor that a concert, arranged by Mr. Arthur Chappell, had to be given for him, in which Madame Nilsson and a host of great artists took part. The Villa Salviati—which he had bought from Signor

Fenzi, the banker and senator, the same man, I believe, who made a large fortune by the salt monopoly—was embellished and adorned with all kinds of works of art, which if sold in London would have fetched five or six times the amount of money which was realized at the sale. But Mario was *insouciance* personified. He strolled along in the streets, while the train was waiting and a whole troupe of artists anxiously expecting him, examining a piece of amber, a well-smoked pipe, of which he was a great connoisseur, or anything he found to interest him. He never cared about business, and only endeavoured to give others as much pleasure as possible, and to let them participate in all his happiness; and no indiscretion, no abuse of his kindness, ever taught him to be more cautious.

It would happen frequently that, his dinner-hour being seven o'clock, some friends dropped in half an hour, an hour, sometimes two hours later—there was always *table ouverte* for all. After dinner he put down two cases of choice cigars, which on one occasion were totally emptied, some individual with a peculiar forethought pro-

viding a little store for the coming week. Mario's attention was drawn to it; all he said was, 'Quite right too; the poor devil never smokes a good cigar.' He himself smoked incessantly, everywhere, and his servant stood in the wings to receive the burning cigar from his mouth at the moment when Mario went on the stage.

His singing at first suffered from want of art, and though it had always the charm which no study can give, yet it wanted polishing to such an extent that very frequently he sang coarsely in the beginning of an opera, partly too because he did not care to 'come out' before the more brilliant development of the opera. There were certain vowels which did not agree with his voice, as I mentioned; and it was on this account that he so frequently altered the words, not always perhaps so much to the advantage of the poet as of the singer. I heard him once in the 'Favorita' insert into the romance 'Spirto gentil,' which he sang so as to be forgiven for any change whatever, the words '*crudel perchè tradirmi crudel perchè*,' which, notwithstanding all want of

common-sense, brought down the house. Through the refined, distinguished style of his talent, he made himself the favourite of the aristocratic audience; whereas Tamberlik, by the power and force of his higher notes, was the man of the masses, who prefer quantity to quality.

His want of exactitude in keeping appointed hours was the object of perpetual anxiety to those who expected him at rehearsals, where he sometimes appeared with the most graceful smile, perfectly unconscious of anything wrong, just as the rehearsal was over; even at performances he often arrived at the last moment, when his entry was already looked for, and he had once to come on without sword or gloves because he had not time to wait another second.

Once he came fully half an hour before his time, to Mdlle. Arditi's christening, and never were people more astonished than to see him arrive in good time. But he excused himself, finding that he had mistaken the hour of twelve for eleven, so that in that case he would have been half an hour behind time. He often used to say that he

always arrived before the time at the railway station, which was literally true, because having missed the train he intended to catch, he was evidently in excellent time for the one to follow.

When on a tour with Miss Dolby, the famous English contralto, and Sainton (since her husband), he kept them in an agony of suspense because he would never drive with them to the station, but in company of his beloved cigar sauntered along; and when at the very moment of the signal for departure he arrived and they all believed he would remain behind, he used to say with the utmost calm : ' Mais il n'y a aucune raison pour s'inquiéter de moi, me voici : je suis toujours là,' as if he had never—no, never—known what it was to be late. *Flâner* was with him a fine art. Once at Osborne, seeing a tree, a fern, perhaps a butterfly that interested him, he left his carriage and began to wander about until he lost his way, and had no idea how to get back to the house. Fortunately for him he saw at some distance a lady watering some flowers, and he walked towards her, addressing her in French (he

never spoke English, although he understood it). He said: 'Seriez-vous assez bonne, Madame, pour m'indiquer les appartements de la Reine?'

'What do you want there?' then said the lady, lifting up her watering-can.

'I want the Queen,' he said; 'I am Signor Mario, and I am ordered to see her Majesty.'

'Well,' said the lady, 'if it is the Queen you want, *vous voilà arrivé;* I am the Queen!'

He had an enthusiastic admiration for '*la bonne reine*' as he called her, and also made a point of seeing the Duchess of Cambridge whenever he had an opportunity. He did so two years ago when he was over here; and I happen to know the painful impression his death caused in very high quarters. In his glorious times the Queen used to go and hear him with Prince Albert, who delighted in his singing, and Mario's life was thereby connected in the mind of the Queen with one of the happiest periods of her life.

To complete his portrait, I must add that,

like every great nature, Mario could at times work himself up to a degree of fearful excitement, and being, as his Italian blood would have it, of a jealous disposition, and united to one who had tendencies in the same direction, scenes of extreme violence sometimes resulted—indeed once he overthrew a table and broke everything in the room; and when remonstrated with by a friend, he locked himself into his room for nearly twenty-four hours, unwilling to admit anybody or listen to any reason.

Madame Grisi, on the other hand, with the constant provocations she had, hot and unreasonable, although *au fond* kind-hearted and good (as in fact he was too), on one occasion screwed herself up to such despair that she rushed out of the room determined to drown herself. An intimate friend ran after her, but she was very fleet of foot, and he just reached her when she threw away her bonnet and shawl ready to commit the act she had come to perpetrate. Nothing would avail; she would listen to no argument —save one! He asked her to consider what she would look like: how dirty and muddy

she would be, drawn out of the water; and so cleverly did he picture how completely her appearance would be spoiled, and so well did he play on the sensitive nerves of the young and handsome prima donna, that she returned to the house, and in the evening sang more beautifully than ever. The truth is, that neither she nor he had ever any real reason for doubt, being most tenderly attached to each other. But does jealousy want reasons? Any seeming pretext will do; and with hot-blooded organization, reasoning is waste of time.

Of Mario's six daughters, Mdlle. Rita di Candia, born in 1849 in London, lives now at Berlin; Angelina is dead; Cecilia is now Mrs. Pearse, and the very image of her father; Cleria is the amiable Mrs. Vaughan; Maria died at Brighton; and Giulia died at Paris. Mario's heart was tender and thoughtful for everybody, so much so that once at Covent Garden, on entering his *loge* and finding his servant asleep on his sofa, he instantly said, 'Oh, don't awake him; he is tired, let him sleep.' That, with such a disposition, he was most tenderly attached to

his children will surprise nobody. During the tour with Miss Dolby, before mentioned, he suddenly heard that one of his children had been seized with low fever, and instantly he broke his engagement, left with Madame Grisi, nursed his sick child until she was out of all danger, and then making the journey from Plymouth to Cambridge in one day, notwithstanding the fatigue, sang most sweetly in the evening. It happened during that tour that he had to sing in Mozart's Requiem, a kind of music not exactly of the same type as 'Don Pasquale,' so Madame Grisi, who used not to stand by his side in the ordinary course of the concerts, expressly went over to him to aid and advise him should he fail; the fun of it being that she was not one shade more of a musician than he was.

Many are the *traits* of his desire to live in peace with others, and to contribute all he could to make those he knew live in peace with each other. He was most generous towards rival singers. It is well known that he did all in his power to recommend and help Tamberlik: it was he who made Salvi go to

St. Petersburg, and although it may be said that he had nothing to fear from any rivalry, few indeed are the tenors who would thus employ their influence to help another tenor on.

In a letter to the *Times* it has been stated that his taste for art was not confined to music. Well, he painted, and in particular he had a great share in designing his own costumes. At Fulham he amused himself with carpentering, with photographing; he modelled some figures of a mermaid in red clay, of large size, which he intended to have executed in marble for his grotto at Florence. In his artistic, as in many other pursuits, he had specially his children in view. They had picked up a number of stones at the seaside on different beaches in England. He collected them, had them polished, and built up a charming frame, a cornice, round a looking-glass, with a perfectly novel effect. His love for children in general was such that during his last years in Rome he often had the children of his servant up in his room and played with them, once severely reproving the mother for

slapping her child. 'I have children myself,' he told her, 'and I have never touched them harshly; you must promise me never to do that again.' And how lovely his children were! I remember how they came, in 1865, three little girls in procession, in Paris, guided by their mother, to Rossini, and sang a trio with their fresh young voices so sweetly that Rossini, plunging deeply into his pocket, brought out three pieces of ten sous (sixpence), and presenting each of the charming singers with one, said: 'Je paie toujours mes artistes. Gardez cela en mémoire de vos premiers appointements.'

In the latter years of Mario's life he never emerged from his bedroom before noon. He was, as we all know, employed by the Italian Government to superintend some of the art collections, to which he devoted himself with his old love for pictures, etc. But as to his singing, with one exception he never dreamed of it—he had not even a piano in his room! The exception of which I speak was when the Queen of Italy begged him to sing her a few notes just to give her an idea of what his voice was like in former times. He

then sang her an old favourite romance by Donizetti, 'Raggio d' amor parea,' an effective piece, written for Cartagenova, a baritone, but giving no idea of the sweet true tenor *timbre* that used to drive the ladies of so many countries quite wild. It amused Mario immensely when he walked in the street and heard his name mentioned, with the accompaniment of a nudging of elbows. Once it happened in Piccadilly that a lady, sitting in her carriage, saw him pass by, and, as it were involuntarily, exclaimed: 'Mario!'

'À votre service, madame,' said the chivalrous tenor at once, which of course made the poor lady blush to the roots of her hair, for she had no idea that he had heard her.

A very few years ago he was in London, and recalling the series of his old triumphs and the generation which adored him, he said to one of his daughters:

'I should like to come here again, and live in London; not in the West End though, but in Bloomsbury all by myself, within easy reach of the British Museum, where I should so much like to go every day.'

Those who wish to see a trace of the irresistible singer in the handsome old man with a long white beard, may find all satisfaction in a lovely photograph lately taken of him by Downey of this metropolis, in which they may admire what remained of all that genial, lovable, enthusiastic organization, that set fire to more than one true heart, and which to the world was comprised in the designation—Mario.

INDEX TO VOL. II.

Alba, Duke of, 234, 286
Albert, Prince, 166, 364
Alboni, 66, 253
Alexander the Great, 15
Amati, 198
Amélie, Queen, 333
D'Angri, 173
Apponyi, Count, 162
Arditi, 362
Auber, 69, 270

Badiali, 269
Badinguet, 80, 92
Bagasset, 92, 95
Balfe, 166, 167
Balzac, 48
Barezzi, 87, 101, 102, 103, 105, 110, 111
Barili, 250, 251, 258, 283
Basili, 103, 104, 105
Battu, 78, 254, 255, 262
Beethoven, 2, 41, 115, 164, 171, 183, 184, 225
Belgiojoso, Count, 107, 353
Belgiojoso, Princess, 288
Bellini, 87, 358
Benedict, Sir J., 81
Beriot, Dr., 184
Berlioz, 2, 57, 85, 192, 223, 225
Berwald, 305
Bianchi, 231
Bindocci, 254
Blanc, Louis, 55
Bloch, Rosine, 69
Boehm, 220
Boito, 152
Bomba, King, 141
Borghese, Princess Pauline, 218, 310
Bosio, 269
Bottesini, 145
Boucher, 172
Braddon, Miss, 137
Brizzi, 357
Bülow, H. v., 40
Bull, Ole, 230
Burdett-Coutts, Baroness, 287
Byron, Lord, 340
B—g—e, Princess, 72

Cabanel, 330
Cabel, 56
Cambridge, Duchess of, 364
Cannizaro, Duchess of, 351, 353
Caldesi, 341
Caraffa, 52
Cartagenova, 270
Carvalho, Mme., 310, 311
Catalani, 164
Caux, Marquis de, 276, 278
Cavaletti, 98, 100
Cavour, 141, 142
Chabot, 52
Chappell, Arthur, 359
Charles V., 24, 108
Cherubini, 209, 210
Chopin, 163, 165, 181, 182, 183, 184, 186, 192
Ciandelli, 226
Cimarosa, 227
Coburg, Duke of, 322
Colbran, Madame, 59
Coletti, 133
Colonna, Duchess of, 339
Concone, 340
Conneau, 79
Correggio, 310
Costa, Sir Michael, 29, 80, 106, 261, 287
Cramer, 182
Cruvelli, 46, 48, 49, 139, 166, 167, 168, 169
Czerny, Ch., 161, 192

Dante, 75
Denner, Baron, 157
Denver, 158
Desguilliers, 59
Dietrichstein, Prince, 157, 158, 163, 164, 172
Dolby, 58, 363, 367
Donatelli, 138
Donizetti, 51, 70, 87, 115, 120, 130, 131, 153, 370
Doré, G., 74, 76, 77
Downey, 371
Dumas, 5, 6, 7, 8, 48, 51, 68, 70, 71
Dupin, 34, 63, 64
Dussek, 183

Emmanuel, Victor, 141, 234, 286
Emperor of Austria, 287, 319
Emperor of Germany, 171, 286
Emperor of Russia, 287, 318, 319, 359
Erard, 180, 204
Ernst, 192
Eugénie, Empress, 287
E——, Count, 177

Farinelli, 358
Faure, 83
Fechter, 344, 345,
Fenzi, 360
Ferrari, 109
Fetis, 103, 104, 157, 161, 172
Fiorentino, 167
Fleury, 31
Flotow, 166, 330
Fodor, 73
Fould, 29, 30
Fragonari, 330
Francis, Emperor, 177
Fraschini, 269
Frederick II., 24, 26, 27
Frezzolini, 269

Galliera, Duke of, 330
Garcia, Manuel, 252
Gardoni, 133
Gautier, Théophile, 336
Gavarni, 273
Georges, St., 60
Gervasoni, 205
Girardin, 71
Goethe, 180
Gottschalk, 259
Gounod, 54, 287
Goupil, 346
Grassini, 288
Greville, Henry, 335
Grisi, 261, 262, 269, 286, 336, 337, 367
Grizoni, 339
Grove, Sir G., 59, 336
Guarnerius, 198, 211
Guizot, 64
Guttierez, A. G., 136
Gye, 129, 248, 261, 262, 264

Hachette, 75
Hagen, 18
Halanzier, 149
Halévy, 228
Hamilton, Count, 298
Hamlet, 85
Handel, 107
Hanslick, Dr., 23, 285
Hawley, 316, 317
Haydn, 57, 105
Hebbel, 16
Holland, Lord, 232
Hoxa, 202
Hugo, Victor, 5, 6, 35, 129, 206, 207
Hummel, 171, 183
Hyacinthe, Cantà, 86

Isabelle, Queen, 82, 286
Ismail Pacha, 142

Janin, J., 60
Jockey Club, 35, 286
Jubal, 202
Jullien, 206, 207, 209, 210

Kaiser, 192
Kant, 19
Kerlin, Jean, 198
Kingsley, 120
Kriehuber, 192

Lablache, 81, 82, 133, 166, 172, 337, 352
Lafont, 227, 228, 229
Lagrange, 29
Lamartine, 5, 6

Landell, 330
Lavigna, 105, 106, 149
Leitzinger, 157
Leroy, 227
Lind, J., 133, 192, 251, 252, 261, 269, 290, 291
Liszt, 57, 65, 161, 163, 165, 184, 185, 186, 187, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 296
Livron, 198, 211, 212
Lloyd, 98
Locle du, 143
Louise, Marie, 88, 226
Lucca, Princess of, 227
Lucca, 247, 248, 323
Lumley, 129, 261, 356
Luther, Martin, 44

MacMahon, 138
Malibran, 165
Manzoni, 151
Maquet, 71
Marcolini, 217
Maretzek, 259
Mariani, 357
Mariette Bey, 143
Mario, 261, 269, 286, 332
Masini, 106, 113
Mathilde, Princess, 62
Mattei, 71, 103
Mayseder, 220
Mendel, 157
Mendelssohn, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 41, 185, 186, 189, 190
Mercadante, 340
Merelli, 113, 116, 118, 119, 121, 122, 126, 127, 128, 309
Merighi, 124, 125
Metternich, Princess, 330
Metternich, Prince Clemens, 159
Meyerbeer, 1, 2, 22, 41, 46, 54, 55, 56, 69, 70, 114, 115, 124, 131, 135, 141, 146, 151, 236, 290, 309
Mirate, 134
Mittag, 161
Moltke, 171
Montecuculi, 297
Moscheles, 171, 181, 182
Mozart, 23, 41, 99, 115, 123, 125, 126, 138, 149, 171, 204, 205, 219, 231
Müller, 158
Muratori, 330
Muzio, 143, 145
M——, Princess, 29, 31, 32, 33, 34

Nadaud, 343
Napoleon I., 88, 218, 225, 288, 289
Napoleon III., 28, 31, 32, 38, 92, 167, 168, 169, 319
Nélaton, 83
Neumann, Angelo, 9
Nice, Bishop of, 234
Nicholas, Emperor, 168, 359
Nicolai, 119
Nicolini, 277, 278
Niebuhr, 203
Nieuwerkerke, Count, 61, 62
Nilsson, Christine, 139, 290, 297, 359

Paer, 211
Paganini, 195
Palestrina, 146
Pallerini, 217
Patti, 68, 74, 78, 139, 173, 204, 245, 309, 322, 323, 325, 326, 328, 334, 358
Pearse, Mrs., 366
Pelissier, 59, 60
Penco, 269
Philip II., 234
Piatti, 125
Piave, 129, 136, 140
Pillet-Will, Comte, 59, 68, 84, 86
Pio IX., 82
Plato, 19
Pleyel, 50, 57
Poniatowski, Prince, 132
Pope Paul III., 108
Potel, 52
Pougin, A., 87, 139
Proudhon, 188
Provany, 343
Provesi, 102
Pugnatta, 101

Queen of Italy, 369
Queen of Spain, 82, 318

Queen, the, 166, 167, 287, 319, 320, 364

Ravel, 356
Reeves, Sims, 166
Rhode, 311
Richter, H., 39, 40, 106
Ricordi, 113, 128, 151
Rigolboche, 32
Robinson, Peter, 162
Roger, 336
Rolla, 205, 206
Romanelli, A., 86
Ronconi, 113
Rossini, 20, 23, 42, 87, 103, 123, 124, 130, 138, 139, 146, 148, 151, 153, 180, 181, 184, 190, 232, 269, 283, 227, 339, 358, 369
Rothschild, Baron, 59, 68, 179, 225, 228
Roze, Marie, 69
Rubini, 332, 333, 337
Rubinstein, 185, 186, 187

Sainton, 342, 338, 363
Salvi, 367
Sand, G., 48
Sardou, 236, 278
Schelle, 23
Schiller, 126, 133
Schubert, 190
Schumann, 170, 171, 174, 175, 178, 179, 180, 183, 184, 189
Schopenhauer, 19, 20
Sechter, 161
Seneca, 39
Shakespeare, 262
Smith, 261
Solera Themistocles, 112, 119, 120
Somerset, Duchess of, 201, 268
Sontag, 164
Spain, King of, 322
Speidl, 23
Straduarius, 198
Strakosch, 79, 251, 256, 259, 260, 334
Strauss, 77, 175, 176, 183
Strepponi, 128
Sullivan, Sir A., 98
Sweden, King of, 318

Talleyrand, 8, 344
Tamberlik, 269, 362, 367
Tamburini, 85, 269
Tartini, 199
Thackeray, 343
Thalberg, 157
Theresa, 39
Thomas, Ambroise, 314
Thomas, J., 204
Tietjens, 355
Tom Thumb, 82
Tornerhjelm, 300, 305
Tozi, 356

Ulman, 259
Uttini, 86

Vallerius, Mdlle. de, 304
Vaughan, Mrs., 366
Verdi, 83, 86, 102, 184, 311
Vernet, Horace, 59, 60
Véron, Dr., 236, 237, 238, 239
Viardot, Madame, 336
Vieuxtemps, 94, 95, 231
Vigier, Baronne, 140
Voltaire, 289

W——, Lord, 264
Wagner, 1, 44, 57, 124, 149, 207
Wales, Prince of, 9, 10
Wartel, 291, 296, 297, 308, 309, 311
Wély, Lefébure, 137
Wetzlar, Baroness, 157
Windischgrätz, Prince, 262
Wollzogen, 18

THE END.

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